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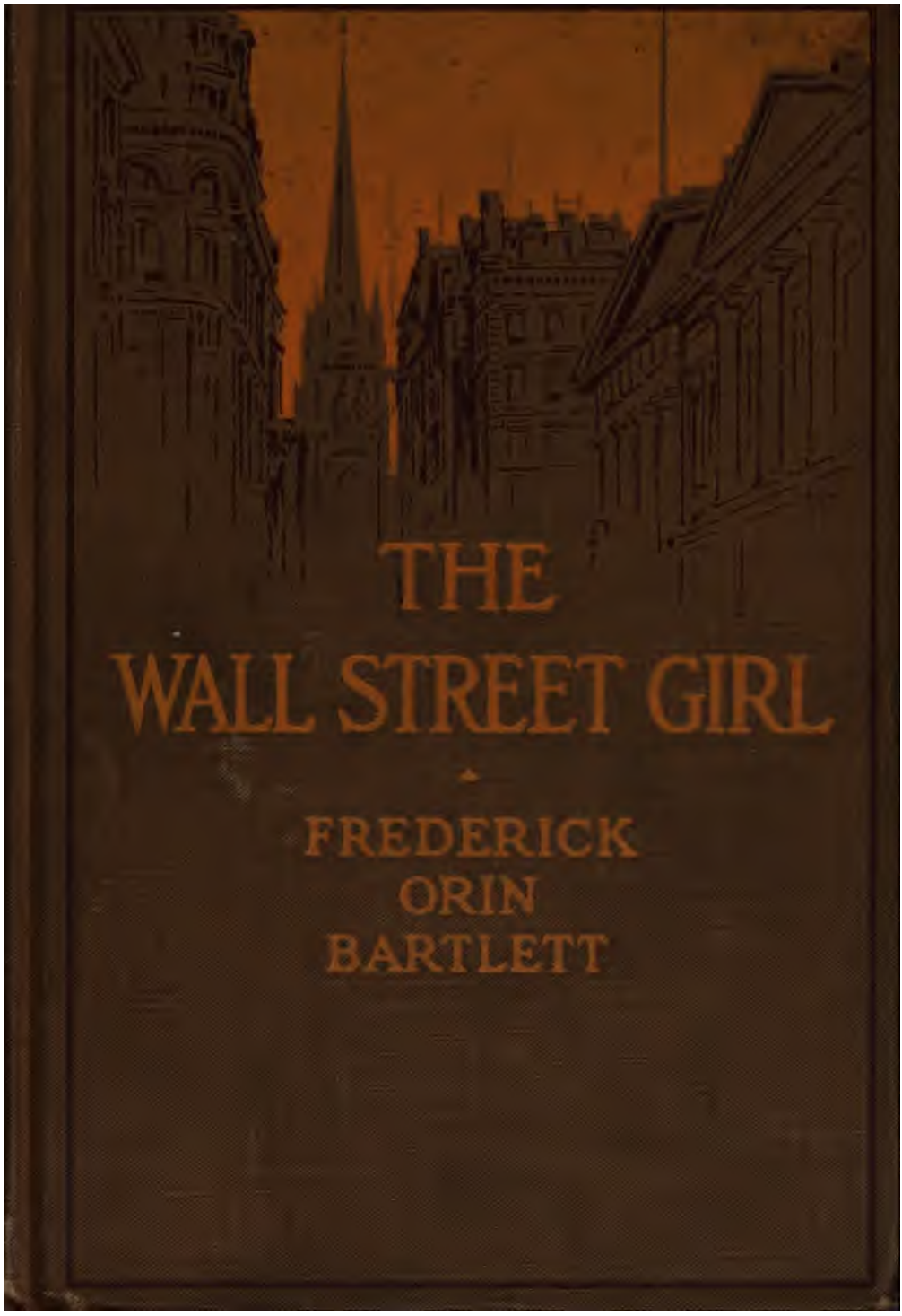

THE WALL STREET GIRL

FREDERICK ORIN BARTLETT

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THE WALL STREET GIRL

IT WAS A FACE THAT INTERESTED HIM (*page 35*)

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1916

THE WALL STREET GIRL

BY

FREDERICK ORIN BARTLETT

With Illustrations by
George Ellis Wolfe

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TO
THALIA

CONTENTS

I. Don receives a Jolt 1
II. It becomes Necessary to eat 11
III. The Queen was in the Parlor . . . 20
IV. Concerning Sandwiches 27
V. Business 43
VI. Two Girls 64
VII. Roses 71
VIII. A Man of Affairs 80
IX. It will never do 93
X. Dictation 100
XI. Steak, with Mushrooms and Advice . . 111
XII. A Social Widow 123
XIII. Dear Sir—. 129
XIV. In Reply 138
XV. Cost 144
XVI. A Memorandum. 153
XVII. On the Way Home. 161
XVIII. A Discourse on Salaries 171
XIX. A Letter 184
XX. Stars 185
XXI. In the Dark 193
XXII. The Sensible Thing 200

CONTENTS

XXIII. Looking Ahead 207
XXIV. Vacations 215
XXV. In the Park 223
XXVI. One Stuyvesant 238
XXVII. The Stars Again 247
XXVIII. Seeing 256
XXIX. Mostly Sally 264
XXX. Don explains 275
XXXI. Sally decides 295
XXXII. Barton appears 305
XXXIII. A Bully World 317
XXXIV. Don makes Good 321
XXXV. "Home, John" 330

ILLUSTRATIONS

IT WAS A FACE THAT INTERESTED HIM . . *Frontispiece*

"MARRY?" BROKE IN DON. "DID YOU SAY *marry?*" 8

"WE CAN BE ENGAGED AS LONG AS WE WISH, CAN'T WE?" 24

"CAN'T? I KNOW MEN WHO SUPPORT A WIFE AND CHILDREN ON LESS" 88

"DON DEAR, YOU'RE LIVING TOO MUCH DOWNTOWN" . 126

"I GUESS WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT FROM MEN" . . 212

"IT'S ABOUT MY GETTING MARRIED" 272

THE WALL STREET GIRL

CHAPTER I

DON RECEIVES A JOLT

BEFORE beginning to read the interesting document in front of him, Jonas Barton, senior member of Barton & Saltonstall, paused to clean his glasses rather carefully, in order to gain sufficient time to study for a moment the tall, good-looking young man who waited indifferently on the other side of the desk. He had not seen his late client's son since the latter had entered college — a black-haired, black-eyed lad of seventeen, impulsive in manner and speech. The intervening four years had tempered him a good deal. Yet, the Pendleton characteristics were all there — the square jaw, the rather large, firm mouth, the thin nose, the keen eyes. They were all there, but each a trifle subdued: the square jaw not quite so square as the father's, the mouth not quite so

large, the nose so sharp, or the eyes so keen. On the other hand, there was a certain fineness that the father had lacked.

In height Don fairly matched his father's six feet, although he still lacked the Pendleton breadth of shoulder.

The son was lean, and his cigarette — a dilettante variation of honest tobacco-smoking that had always been a source of irritation to his father — did not look at all out of place between his long, thin fingers; in fact, nothing else would have seemed quite suitable. Barton was also forced to admit to himself that the young man, in some miraculous way, managed to triumph over his rather curious choice of raiment, based presumably on current styles. In and of themselves the garments were not beautiful. From Barton's point of view, Don's straw hat was too large and too high in the crown. His black-and-white check suit was too conspicuous and cut close to the figure in too feminine a fashion. His lavender socks, which matched a lavender tie, went well enough with the light stick he carried; but, in Barton's opinion, a young man of twenty-two had no

business to carry a light stick. By no stretch of the imagination could one picture the elder Pendleton in such garb, even in his jauntiest days. And yet, as worn by Don, it seemed as if he could not very well have worn anything else. Even the mourning-band about his left arm, instead of adding a somber touch, afforded an effective bit of contrast. This, however, was no fault of his. That mourning has artistic possibilities is a happy fact that has brought gentle solace to many a widow.

On the whole, Barton could not escape the deduction that the son reflected the present rather than the past. Try as he might, it was difficult for him to connect this young man with Grandfather Pendleton, shipbuilder of New Bedford, or with the father who in his youth commanded the Nancy R. But that was by no means his duty — as Don faintly suggested when he uncrossed his knees and hitched forward impatiently.

"Your father's will is dated three years ago last June," began Barton.

"At the end of my freshman year," Don observed.

Jonas Barton adjusted his spectacles and began to read. He read slowly and very distinctly, as if anxious to give full value to each syllable:

"New York City, borough of Manhattan, State of New York. I, Donald Joshua Pendleton, being of sound mind and —"

Donald Pendleton, Jr., waved an objection with his cigarette.

"Can't you cut out all the legal stuff and just give me the gist of it? There's no doubt about father having been of sound mind and so forth."

"It is customary —" began the attorney.

"Well, we'll break the custom," Don cut in sharply.

Barton glanced up. It might have been his late client speaking; it gave him a start.

"As you wish," he assented. "Perhaps, however, I may be allowed to observe that in many ways your father's will is peculiar."

"It would n't be father's will if it was n't peculiar," declared Don.

Barton pushed the papers away from him.

"Briefly, then," he said, "your father leaves his entire estate to you — in trust."

Don leaned forward, his stick grasped in his gloved hands.

"I don't get that last."

"In trust," repeated Barton with emphasis. "He has honored our firm with the commission of serving as a board of trustees for carrying out the terms of the will."

"You mean to fix my allowance?"

"To carry out the terms of the will, which are as follows: namely, to turn over to you, but without power of conveyance, the paternal domicile on West Sixtieth Street with all its contents."

Don frowned.

"Paternal domicile — I can translate that all right. I suppose you mean the house. But what's that line 'without power of conveyance'?"

"It means that you are at liberty to occupy the premises, but that you are to have no power to sell, to rent, or to dispose of the property in any way whatsoever."

Don appeared puzzled.

"That's a bit queer. What do you suppose Dad thought I wanted of a place that size to live in?"

"I think your father was a man of considerable sentiment."

"Eh?"

"Sentiment," Barton repeated. "It was there you were born, and there your mother died."

"Yes, that's all correct; but — well, go on."

"The rest of the document, if you insist upon a digest, consists principally of directions to the trustees. Briefly, it provides that we invest the remainder of the property in safe bonds and apply the interest to meet taxes on the aforesaid paternal domicile, to retain and pay the wages of the necessary servants, to furnish fuel and water, and to maintain the house in proper repair."

"Well, go on."

"In case of your demise —"

"You may skip my demise; I'm not especially interested in that."

"Then I think we have covered all the more important provisions," Barton concluded.

"All?" exclaimed Don. "What do you think I'm going to live on?"

Here was the clash for which Barton had

been waiting. His face hardened, and he shoved back his chair a little.

"I am not able to find any provision in the will relating to that," he answered.

"Eh? But what the deuce —"

For a moment Don stared open-mouthed at the lawyer. Then he reached in his pocket for his cigarettes, selected one with some deliberation, and tapped an end upon the case.

"You said Dad had considerable sentiment," he observed. "It strikes me he has shown more humor than sentiment."

Barton was still aggressive. To tell the truth, he expected some suggestion as to the possibility of breaking the will; but if ever he had drawn a paper all snug and tight, it was the one in question.

"Damme," Pendleton, Sr., had said. "Damme, Barton, if the lad is able to break the will, I'll rise in my grave and haunt you the rest of your days."

If the boy wished to test the issue, Barton was ready for him. But the boy's thoughts seemed to be on other things.

"I suppose," mused Pendleton, Jr., "I sup-

pose it was that freshman scrape that worried him."

"I was not informed of that," replied Barton.

"It made good reading," the young man confided. "But, honest, it was not so bad as the papers made it out. Dad was a good sport about it, anyhow. He cleared it up and let me go on."

"If you will allow me to advance an opinion, — a strictly personal opinion, — it is that Mr. Pendleton devised the entire will with nothing else but your welfare in mind. He had a good deal of pride, and desired above all things to have you retain the family home. If I remember correctly, he said you were the last lineal descendant."

Don nodded pleasantly.

"The last. Kind of looks as if he wanted me to remain the last."

"On the contrary," ventured Barton, "I think he hoped you might marry and —"

"Marry?" broke in Don. "Did you say *marry?*"

"I even understood, from a conversation with your father just before his death, that you

"MARRY?" BROKE IN DON. "DID YOU SAY *MARRY?*"

— er — were even then engaged. Am I mistaken?"

"No; that's true enough. But say — look here."

The young man reached in his pocket and brought forth a handful of crumpled bills and loose change. He counted it carefully.

"Twelve dollars and sixty-three cents," he announced. "What do you think Frances Stuyvesant will say to that?"

Barton refrained from advancing an opinion.

"What do you think Morton H. Stuyvesant will say?" demanded Don.

No point of law being involved in the query, Jonas Barton still refrained.

"What do you think Mrs. Morton H. Stuyvesant will say, and all the uncles and aunties and nephews and nieces?"

"Not being their authorized representative, I am not prepared to answer," Barton replied. "However, I think I can tell you what your father would do under these circumstances."

"What?" inquired Don.

"He would place all the facts in the case

before the girl, then before her father, and learn just what they had to say."

"Wrong. He would n't go beyond the girl," answered Don.

He replaced the change in his pocket.

"Ah," he sighed — "them were the happy days."

"If I remember correctly," continued Jonas Barton thoughtfully, "twelve dollars and sixty-three cents was fully as much as your father possessed when he asked your mother to marry him. That was just after he lost his ship off Hatteras."

"Yes, them were the happy days," nodded Don. "But, at that, Dad had his nerve with him."

"He did," answered Barton. "He had his nerve with him always."

CHAPTER II

IT BECOMES NECESSARY TO EAT

In spite of the continued efforts of idealists to belittle it, there is scarcely a fact of human experience capable of more universal substantiation than that in order to live it is necessary to eat. The corollary is equally true: in order to eat it is necessary to pay.

Yet until now Pendleton had been in a position to ignore, if not to refute, the latter statement. There was probably no detail of his daily existence calling for less thought or effort than this matter of dining. Opportunities were provided on every hand, — at the houses of his friends, at his club, at innumerable cafés and hotels, — and all that he was asked to contribute was an appetite.

It was not until he had exhausted his twelve dollars and sixty-three cents that Don was in any position to change his point of view. But that was very soon. After leaving the office of Barton & Saltonstall at eleven, he took a taxi to

the Harvard Club, which immediately cut down his capital to ten dollars and thirteen cents. Here he met friends, Higgins and Watson and Cabot of his class, and soon he had disposed of another dollar. They then persuaded him to walk part way downtown with them. On his return, he passed a florist's, and, remembering that Frances was going that afternoon to a *thé dansant*, did the decent thing and sent up a dozen roses, which cost him five dollars. Shortly after this he passed a confectioner's, and of course had to stop for a box of Frances's favorite bonbons, which cost him another dollar.

Not that he considered the expense in the least. As long as he was able to reach in his pocket and produce a bill of sufficient value to cover the immediate investment, that was enough. But it is surprising how brief a while ten dollars will suffice in a leisurely stroll on Fifth Avenue. Within a block of the confectionery store two cravats that took his fancy and a box of cigarettes called for his last bill, and actually left him with nothing but a few odd pieces of silver. Even this did not impress

him as significant, because, as it happened, his wants were for the moment fully satisfied.

It was a clear October day, and, quite unconscious of the distance, Don continued up the Avenue to Sixtieth Street — to the house where he was born. In the last ten years he had been away a good deal from that house, — four years at Groton, four at Harvard, — but, even so, the house had always remained in the background of his consciousness as a fixed point.

Nora opened the door for him, as she had for twenty years.

"Are you to be here for dinner, sir?" she inquired.

"No, Nora," he answered; "I shall dine out to-night."

Nora appeared uneasy.

"The cook, sir, has received a letter — a very queer sort of letter, sir — from a lawyer gentleman."

"Eh?"

"He said she was to keep two accounts, sir: one for the servants' table and one for the house."

"Oh, that's probably from old Barton."

"Barton — yes, sir, that was the name. Shall I bring you the letter, sir?"

"Don't bother, Nora. It's all right. He's my new bookkeeper."

"Very well, sir. Then you'll give orders for what you want?"

"Yes, Nora."

In the library an open fire was burning brightly on the hearth, as always it had been kept burning for his father. With his hands behind his back, he stood before it and gazed around the big room. It seemed curiously empty with the old man gone. The machinery of the house as adjusted by him still continued to run on smoothly. And yet, where at certain hours he should have been, he was not. It was uncanny.

It was a little after one; Don determined to change his clothes and stroll downtown for luncheon — possibly at Sherry's. He was always sure there of running across some one he knew.

He went to his room and dressed with some care, and then walked down to Forty-fourth Street. Before deciding to enter the dining-

room, however, he stood at the entrance a moment to see if there was any one there he recognized. Jimmy Harndon saw him and rose at once.

"Hello, Jimmy," Don greeted him.

"Hello, Don. You came in the nick of time. Lend me ten, will you?"

"Sure," answered Don.

He sought his bill-book. It was empty. For a moment he was confused.

"Oh, never mind," said Jimmy, perceiving his embarrassment. "I'll 'phone Dad to send it up by messenger. Bit of fool carelessness on my part. You'll excuse me?"

Harndon hurried off to the telephone.

Don stared at his empty pocket-book, at the head waiter, who still stood at the door expectantly, and then replaced the empty wallet in his pocket. There was no use waiting here any longer. He could not dine, if he wished. Never before in his life had he been confronted by such a situation. Once or twice he had been in Harndon's predicament, but that had meant no more to him than it meant to Harndon — nothing but a temporary embarrassment. The differ-

ence now was that Harndon could still telephone his father and that he could not. Here was a significant distinction; it was something he must think over.

Don went on to the Harvard Club. He passed two or three men he knew in the lobby, but shook his head at their invitation to join them. He took a seat by himself before an open fire in a far corner of the lounge. Then he took out his bill-book again, and examined it with some care, in the hope that a bill might have slipped in among his cards. The search was without result. Automatically his father's telephone number suggested itself, but that number now was utterly without meaning. A new tenant already occupied those offices — a tenant who undoubtedly would report to the police a modest request to forward to the Harvard Club by messenger a hundred dollars.

He was beginning to feel hungry — much hungrier than he would have felt with a pocket full of money. Of course his credit at the club was good. He could have gone into the dining-room and ordered what he wished. But credit took on a new meaning. Until now it had been

nothing but a trifling convenience, because at the end of the month he had only to forward his bill to his father. But that could not be done any longer.

He could also have gone to any one of a dozen men of his acquaintance and borrowed from five to fifty dollars. But it was one thing to borrow as he had in the past, and another to borrow in his present circumstances. He had no right to borrow. The whole basis of his credit was gone.

The situation was, on the face of it, so absurd that the longer he thought it over the more convinced he became that Barton had made some mistake. He decided to telephone Barton.

It was with a sense of relief that Don found the name of Barton & Saltonstall still in the telephone-book. It would not have surprised him greatly if that too had disappeared. It was with a still greater sense of relief that he finally heard Barton's voice.

"Look here," he began. "It seems to me there must be some misunderstanding somewhere. Do you realize that I'm stony broke?"

"Why, no," answered Barton. "I thought

you showed me the matter of thirteen dollars or so."

"I did; but that's gone, and all I have now is the matter of thirteen cents or so."

"I'm sorry," answered Barton. "If a small loan would be of any temporary advantage —"

"Hang it!" cut in Don. "You don't think I'm trying to borrow, do you?"

"I beg your pardon. Perhaps you will tell me, then, just what you do wish."

"I must eat, must n't I?"

"I consider that a fair presumption."

"Then what the deuce!"

Don evidently expected this ejaculation to be accepted as a full and conclusive statement. But, as far as Barton was concerned, it was not. "Yes?" he queried.

"I say, what the deuce?"

"I don't understand."

"What am I going to do?"

"Oh, I see. You mean, I take it, what must you do in order to provide yourself with funds."

"Exactly," growled Don.

"Of course, the usual method is to work," suggested Barton.

"Eh?"

"To find a position with some firm which, in return for your services, is willing to pay you a certain fixed sum weekly or monthly. I offer you the suggestion for what it is worth. You can think it over."

"Think it over!" exclaimed Don. "How long do you think I can think on thirteen cents?"

"If you authorize me to act for you, I have no doubt something can be arranged."

"You seem to hold all the cards."

"I am merely obeying your father's commands," Barton hastened to assure him. "Now, can you give me any idea what you have in mind?"

"I'll do anything except sell books," Don answered promptly.

"Very well," concluded Barton. "I'll advise you by mail as soon as anything develops."

"Thanks."

"In the mean while, if you will accept a loan —"

"Thanks again," answered Don; "but I'll go hungry first." He hung up the receiver and went back to the lounge.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEEN WAS IN THE PARLOR

STUYVESANT was proud of his daughter — proud of her beauty, proud of her ability to dress, proud of her ability to spend money. She gave him about the only excuse he now had for continuing to hold his seat on the Stock Exchange. The girl was tall and dark and slender, and had an instinct for clothes that permitted her to follow the vagaries of fashion to their extremes with the assurance of a Parisienne, plus a certain Stuyvesant daring that was American. At dinner that night she wore, for Don's benefit, a new French gown that made even him catch his breath. It was beautiful, but without her it would not have been beautiful. Undoubtedly its designer took that into account when he designed the gown.

The dinner was in every way a success, and a credit to the Stuyvesant chef — who, however, it must be said, seldom had the advantage of catering to a guest that had not lunched. Stuy-

vesant was in a good humor, Mrs. Stuyvesant pleasantly negative as usual, and Frances radiant. Early in the evening Stuyvesant went off to his club for a game of bridge, and Mrs. Stuyvesant excused herself to write notes.

"I met Reggie Howland at the tea this afternoon," said Frances. "He was very nice to me."

"Why should n't he be?" inquired Don.

"I rather thought you would come. Really, when one goes to all the bother of allowing one's self to be engaged, the least one expects is a certain amount of attention from one's fiancé."

She was standing by the piano, and he went to her side and took her hand — the hand wearing the solitaire that had been his mother's.

"You're right," he nodded; "but I was all tied up with business this afternoon."

She raised her dark brows a trifle.

"Business?"

"Lots of it," he nodded. "Come over here and sit down; I want to tell you about it."

He led her to a chair before the open fire. He himself continued to stand with his back to the flames. He was not serious. The situation

struck him now as even funnier than it had in Barton's office. He had in his pocket just thirteen cents, and yet here he was in Stuyvesant's house, engaged to Stuyvesant's daughter.

"It seems," he began — "it seems that Dad would have his little joke before he died."

"Yes?" she responded indifferently. She was bored by business of any sort.

"I had a talk to-day with Barton — his lawyer. Queer old codger, Barton. Seems he's been made my guardian. Dad left him to me in his will. He left me Barton, the house, and twelve dollars and sixty-three cents."

"Yes, Don."

She did not quite understand why he was going into details. They did not seem to concern her, even as his fiancée.

"Of that patrimony I now have thirteen cents left," Don continued. "See, here it is."

He removed from his pocket two nickels and three coppers.

"It does n't look like much, does it?"

"Oh, Don," she laughed, "do be serious!"

"I am serious," he assured her. "I've been serious ever since I went to Sherry's for lunch,

and found I did not have enough for even a club sandwich."

"But, Don!" she gasped.

"It's a fact. I had to leave."

"Then where *did* you lunch?"

"I did n't lunch."

"You mean you did not have enough change to buy something to eat?"

"I had thirteen cents. You can't buy anything with that, can you?"

"I — I don't know."

Suddenly she remembered how, once on her way home from Chicago, she lost her purse and did not have sufficient change left even to wire her father to meet her. She was forced to walk from the station to the house. The experience had always been like a nightmare to her. She rose and stood before him.

"But, Don — what are you going to do?"

"I telephoned Barton, and he suggested I take some sort of position with a business house. He's going to find something for me. I'm not worrying about that; but what I want to know is what I ought to do about you."

"I don't understand, Don."

"I mean about our engagement."

She looked puzzled.

"I'm afraid I'm very stupid."

"We can't be married on thirteen cents, can we?"

"But we need n't be married until you have more, need we?"

"That's so. And you're willing to wait?"

"You know I've told you I did n't wish to be married before spring, anyway. I think it's much pleasanter staying just as we are."

"We can't be engaged all our lives," he protested.

"We can be engaged as long as we wish, can't we?"

"I want to marry you as soon as I can."

Her eyes brightened and she placed a soft hand upon his arm.

"That's nice of you, Don," she said. "But you don't know what a frightfully expensive burden I'll be as a wife."

"If I earned, to start with, say fifty dollars a week — would you marry me on that?"

"If I did, what would we live on?" she inquired.

"WE CAN BE ENGAGED AS LONG AS WE WISH, CAN'T WE?"

"Well, I have the house. That's provided for — all except the table."

"But if I spent the fifty dollars for a new hat, then what would we have left for provisions?"

"You must n't spend it all on a new hat," he warned.

"Then, there are gowns and — oh, lots of things you don't know anything about."

"Could n't you get along with a little less?"

She thought a moment.

"I don't see how," she decided. "I never get anything I don't want."

"That's something," he nodded approvingly. "Then you think I must earn more than fifty a week?"

"I only know that Dad gives me an allowance of ten thousand a year, and there's never anything left," she answered.

"Ten thousand a year!" he exclaimed.

"Everything is so expensive to-day, Don. All this talk sounds frightfully vulgar, but — there's no use pretending, is there?"

"Not a bit," he answered. "If ten thousand a year is what you need, ten thousand a year is what I must earn."

"I don't believe it's very hard, because Dad does it so easily," she declared.

"I'll get it," he nodded confidently. "And, now that it's all settled, let's forget it. Come over to the piano and sing for me."

He sat down before the keys and played her accompaniments, selecting his own songs. They ran through some of the latest opera successes, and then swung off to the simpler and older things. It was after "Annie Laurie" that he rose and looked deep into her eyes.

"I'll get it for you," he said soberly.

"Oh, Don!" she whispered. "Sometimes nothing seems important but just you."

CHAPTER IV

CONCERNING SANDWICHES

THE arrangement that Barton made for his late client's son was to enter the banking house of Carter, Rand & Seagraves, on a salary of twelve hundred dollars a year. Don found the letter at the Harvard Club the next morning, and immediately telephoned Barton.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "I appreciate what you've tried to do and all that, but what in thunder good is twelve hundred dollars a year?"

"It is at least twelve hundred more than you have now," suggested Barton.

"But how can I live on it?"

"You must remember you have the house—"

"Hang the house," Don interrupted. "I must eat and smoke and buy clothes, must n't I? Besides, there's Frances. She needs ten thousand a year."

"I have no doubt but that, in time, a man of your ability—"

"How long a time?"

"As to that I am not prepared to give an opinion," replied Barton.

"Because it is n't when I'm eighty that I want it."

"I should say the matter was entirely in your own hands. This at least offers you an opening, and I advise you to accept it. However, you must decide for yourself; and if at any later date I may be of service —"

Don returned to the lounge to think the matter over. It was ten o'clock and he had not yet breakfasted. As he had neglected to send any provisions to the house, Nora, acting upon his orders of the day before, had not prepared anything for him — there was nothing to prepare.

However, whether he ate breakfast or not was a detail. That is to say, it was a detail when he left the house; but now, after the brisk walk to the club in the snapping cold air, it had grown in importance. Watson, on his way into the dining-room, passed him.

"Join me?" he asked, waving a greeting with the morning paper.

"Thanks," answered Don. "Guess I'll wait a bit."

Watson went on.

Don returned to a consideration of Barton's proposal. He was forced to admit that the old lawyer had an irritating knack of ignoring all incidental issues and stripping a problem to a statement of irrefutable fact. It was undeniable, for example, that what Don might desire in the way of salary did not affect the truth of Barton's contention that twelve hundred dollars was a great deal more than nothing. With a roof over his head assured him, it was possible that he might, with economy, be able at least to keep alive on this salary. That, of course, was a matter to be considered. As for Frances, she was at present well provided for and need not be in the slightest affected by the smallness of his income. Then, there was the possibility of a rapid advance. He had no idea how those things were arranged, but his limited observation was to the effect that his friends who went into business invariably had all the money they needed, and that most of his older acquaintances — friends of his father — were presidents

and vice-presidents with unlimited bank accounts. Considering these facts, Don grew decidedly optimistic.

In the mean time his hunger continued to press him. His body, like a greedy child, demanded food. Watson came out and, lighting a fresh cigarette, sank down comfortably into a chair next him.

"What's the matter, Don — off your feed?" he inquired casually.

"Something of the sort," nodded Don.

"Party last night?"

"No; guess I have n't been getting exercise enough."

He rose. Somehow, Watson bored him this morning.

"I'm going to take a hike down the Avenue. S'long."

Don secured his hat, gloves, and stick, and started from the club at a brisk clip.

From Forty-fourth Street to the Twenties was as familiar a path as any in his life. He had traversed it probably a thousand times. Yet, this morning it suddenly became almost as strange as some street in Kansas City or San Francisco.

There were three reasons for this, any one of which would have accounted for the phenomenon: he was on his way to secure a job; he had in his pocket just thirteen cents; and he was hungry.

The stores before which he always stopped for a leisurely inspection of their contents took on a different air this morning. Quite automatically he paused before one and another of them and inspected the day's display of cravats and waistcoats. But, with only thirteen cents in his pocket, a new element entered into his consideration of these things — the element of cost. It was at the florist's that his situation was brought home to him even more keenly. Frances liked flowers, and she liked to receive them from him. Here were roses that looked as if they had been plucked for her. But they were behind a big plate-glass window. He had never noted before that, besides being transparent, plate-glass was also thick and hard. And he was hungry. The fact continually intruded itself.

At last he reached the address that Barton had given him. "Carter, Rand & Seagraves,

Investment Securities," read the inscription on the window. He passed through the revolving doors and entered the office.

A boy in buttons approached and took his card.

"Mr. Carter, Mr. Rand, or Mr. Seagraves," said Don.

The boy was soon back.

"Mr. Farnsworth will see you in a few minutes," he reported.

"Farnsworth?" inquired Don.

"He's the gent what sees every one," explained the boy. "Ticker's over there."

He pointed to a small machine upon a stand, which was slowly unfurling from its mouth a long strip of paper such as prestidigitators produce from silk hats. Don crossed to it, and studied the strip with interest. It was spattered with cryptic letters and figures, much like those he had learned to use indifferently well in a freshman course in chemistry. The only ones he recalled just then were H_2O and CO_2, and he amused himself by watching to see if they turned up.

"Mr. Pendleton?"

Don turned to find a middle-aged gentleman standing before him with outstretched hand.

"Mr. Barton wrote to us about you," Farnsworth continued briskly. "I believe he said you had no business experience."

"No," admitted Don.

"Harvard man?"

Don named his class.

"Your father was well known to us. We are willing to take you on for a few months, if you wish to try the work. Of course, until you learn something of the business you won't be of much value; but if you'd like to start at — say twenty-five dollars a week — why, we'd be glad to have you."

At the beginning Don had a vague notion of estimating his value at considerably more; but Mr. Farnsworth was so decided, it did not seem worth while. At that moment, also, he was reminded again that he had not yet breakfasted.

"Thanks," he replied. "When shall I begin?"

"Whenever you wish. If you have n't anything on to-day, you might come in now, meet some of the men, and get your bearings."

"All right," assented Don.

Within the next five minutes Farnsworth had introduced him to Blake and Manson and Wheaton and Powers and Jennings and Chandler. Also to Miss Winthrop, a very busy stenographer. Then he left him in a chair by Powers's desk. Powers was dictating to Miss Winthrop, and Don became engrossed in watching the nimbleness of her fingers.

At the end of his dictation, Powers excused himself and went out, leaving Don alone with Miss Winthrop. For a moment he felt a bit uncomfortable; he was not quite sure what the etiquette of a business office demanded in a situation of this sort. Soon, however, he realized that the question was solving itself by the fact that Miss Winthrop was apparently oblivious to his presence. If he figured in her consciousness any more than one of the office chairs, she gave no indication of it. She was transcribing from her notebook to the typewriter, and her fingers moved with marvelous dexterity and sureness. There was a sureness about every other movement, as when she slipped in a new sheet of paper or addressed an envelope or

raised her head. There was a sureness in her eyes. He found himself quite unexpectedly staring into them once, and they did n't waver, although he was not quite certain, even then, that they saw him. They were brown eyes, honest and direct, above a good nose and a mouth that, while retaining its girlish mobility, also revealed an unexpected trace of almost manlike firmness. It was a face that interested him, but, before he was able to determine in just what way, she finished her last letter and, rising abruptly, disappeared into a rear room. Presently she emerged, wearing a hat and coat.

It was, on the whole, a very becoming hat and a very becoming coat, though they would not have suited at all the critical taste of Frances Stuyvesant. But they had not been designed for that purpose.

Miss Winthrop paused to readjust a pin and the angle of her hat. Then she took a swift glance about the office.

"I guess the boys must have gone," she said to Don. "This is the lunch hour."

Don rose.

"Thank you for letting me know," he replied cordially.

"Most of them get back at one," she informed him.

"Then you think I may go out until then?"

"I don't see why not. But I'd be back at one sharp if I were you."

"Thanks, I will."

Don gave her an opportunity to go out the door and disappear before he himself followed. He had a notion that she could have told him, had he asked, where in this neighborhood it was possible to get the most food for the least money. He had a notion, also, that such a question would not have shocked her. It was difficult to say by just what process he reached this conclusion, but he felt quite sure of it.

Don was now firmly determined to invest a portion of his thirteen cents in something to eat. It had no longer become a matter of volition, but an acute necessity. For twenty minutes he wandered about rather aimlessly; then, in a sort of alley, he found a dairy lunch where in plain figures coffee was offered at five cents a cup, and egg sandwiches at the same price. The

place was well filled, but he was fortunate in slipping into a chair against the wall just as a man was slipping out. It was a chair where one broad arm served as a table. Next to him sat a young woman in a black hat, munching a chocolate éclair. She looked up as he sat down, and frowned. Don rose at once.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I did n't know you were here. Honest I did n't."

"Well, it's a public lunch, is n't it?" she inquired. "I'm almost through."

"Then you don't mind if I stay?"

"It 's no business of mine," she said curtly.

"But I don't want you to think I — I'm intruding."

She glanced at him again.

"Let's forget it," she decided. "But you might sit there all day and you would n't get anything to eat."

He looked around, uncertain as to just what she meant.

"You go to the counter, pick out what you want, and bring it back here," she explained. "I'll hold your seat for you."

Don made his way into the crowd at the rear.

At the counter he found he had for ten cents a wide choice; but her éclair had looked so good he selected one of those and a cup of coffee. In returning he lost a portion of the coffee, but he brought the éclair through safely. He deposited it on the arm of the chair and sat down. In spite of his utmost effort at self-control, that éclair made just four mouthfuls. It seemed to him that he had no more than picked up his fork than it was gone. However, he still had his coffee, and he settled back to enjoy that in a more temperate fashion.

Without apparently taking the slightest interest in him, Miss Winthrop observed the rapidity with which he concluded his lunch. She knew something about being hungry, and if she was any judge that tidbit produced no more impression upon this six-foot man than a peanut on an elephant.

"That all you're going to eat?" she demanded.

Don was startled. The question was both unexpected and pointed. He met her eyes — brown eyes and very direct. The conventional explanation that he had ready about not caring

for much in the middle of the day seemed scarcely worth while.

"Yes," he answered.

"Broke?" she inquired.

He nodded.

"Then you ought to have had an egg sandwich instead of one of those things," she informed him.

"But the one you had looked so good," he smiled.

"I had an egg sandwich to start with; this was dessert."

"I did n't know," he apologized.

"You ought to get one now. You won't last until night on just that."

"How much are they?" he inquired.

"A nickel."

"Then I guess I won't have one."

"Have n't you five cents?" she cross-examined.

"Only three cents," he answered.

"And you begin work to-day?"

"Yes."

"It's only Tuesday, and you won't get paid until Saturday."

"So?"

"Do you expect to make that éclair go until then?"

"I had n't thought much about it," he answered uneasily.

"You don't look as if you would," she said. "You are new to this, are n't you?"

"Yes."

He did not resent her questioning; and it did not occur to him to give her an evasive reply.

"Just out of college?"

"Last fall."

"What you been doing since then?"

"Why, nothing," he admitted. "You see, my father died only last month, and —"

"Oh, I see," she said more gently. "That's hard luck."

"It makes a good deal of a difference," he said.

"I know."

It had made a difference in her life when her father died.

She turned to her éclair; but, as she was raising the fork to her lips, she caught his eyes and put it down again.

"Look here," she said; "you must eat something. You can't get along without food. I've tried it."

"You!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed, yes."

"Dieting?"

"Hardly," she replied grimly.

He had heard of men going perforce without food, but he did not remember ever having heard of a woman in that predicament. Certainly he had never before met one.

"You mean that you've gone broke, too?"

"Why, certainly," she answered. "The firm I was with first went broke, and it was a couple of months before I found another position. But that's over now. What I want to know is what *you're* going to do until Saturday."

"Oh, I'll worry along," he answered confidently.

She shook her head.

"Worry won't carry you along."

She hesitated a moment, and then said impulsively: —

"Now, look here — don't get peeved at what I'm going to say, will you?"

"I don't believe it's possible to get peeved with you," he declared.

She frowned.

"Well, let it go at that. What I want to do is to lend you a couple of dollars until Saturday. It is n't much, but —"

Don caught his breath. "You —"

She did not give him time to finish. From somewhere she produced a two-dollar bill and slipped it into his hand.

"Take this and get an egg sandwich right now."

"But look here —"

"Don't talk. Go get a sandwich."

He seemed to have no alternative; but when he came back with it she had disappeared.

He sat down, but he could not understand why she should have gone like that. He missed her — missed her more than he would have thought possible, considering that he had met her only some two hours before. Without her this place seemed empty and foreign. Without her he felt uneasy here. He hurried through his sandwich and went out — anxious to get back to her.

CHAPTER V

BUSINESS

WHEN Don came back to the office he found Miss Winthrop again at her typewriter, but she did not even glance up as he took his former place at Powers's desk. If this was not particularly flattering, it at least gave him the privilege of watching her. But it was rather curious that he found in this enough to hold his attention for half an hour. It is doubtful whether he could have watched Frances herself for so long a time without being bored.

It was the touch of seriousness about the girl's eyes and mouth that now set him to wondering — a seriousness that he had sometimes noted in the faces of men who had seen much of life.

Life — that was the keynote. He felt that she had been in touch with life, and had got the better of it: that there had been drama in her past, born of contact with men and women. She had been dealing with such problems as securing food — and his experience of the last

twenty-four hours had hinted at how dramatic that may be; with securing lodgings for the night; with the problem of earning not more money but enough money to keep her alive. All this had left its mark, not in ugliness, but in a certain seriousness that made him keen to know about her. Here was a girl who was not especially concerned with operas, with books, with the drama, but with the stuff of which those things are made.

Miss Winthrop removed from her typewriter the final page of the long letter she had finished and rapidly went over it for errors. She found none. But, as she gathered her papers together before taking them into the private office of Mr. Farnsworth, she spoke. She spoke without even then glancing at Don — as if voicing a thought to herself.

"Believe me," she said, "they are not going to pay you for sitting there and watching me."

Don felt the color spring to his cheeks.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized.

"It does n't bother me any," she continued, as she rose. "Only there is n't any money for the firm in that sort of thing."

"But there does n't seem to be anything around here for me to do."

"Then make something," she concluded, as she moved away.

Blake, to whom he had been introduced, was sitting at his desk reading an early edition of an evening paper. Spurred on by her admonition, he strolled over there. Blake glanced up with a nod.

"How you making it?" he inquired.

"There does n't seem to be much for me to do," said Don. "Can you suggest anything?"

"Farnsworth will dig up enough for you later on. I would n't worry about that."

"But I don't know anything about the game."

"You'll pick it up. Did I understand Farnsworth to say you were Harvard?"

"Yes."

"I'm Princeton. Say, what sort of a football team have you this year?"

Don knew football. He had played right end on the second team. He also knew Princeton, and if the information he gave Blake about the team ever went back to New Jersey it did not

do the coaching staff there any good. However, it furnished a subject for a pleasant half hour's conversation. Then Blake went out, and Don returned to his former place back of Powers's desk.

"I'll bet you did n't get much out of him," observed Miss Winthrop, without interrupting the click of her machine.

"He seems rather a decent sort," answered Don.

"Perhaps he is," she returned.

"He's a Princeton man," Don informed her.

"He's Percy A. Blake," she declared — as if that were a fact of considerably more importance.

He waited to see if she was ready to volunteer any further information, but apparently she considered this sufficient.

At that point Farnsworth came out and took a look about the office. His eyes fell upon Don, and he crossed the room.

He handed Don a package.

"I wish you would deliver these to Mr. Hayden, of Hayden & Wigglesworth," he requested.

Farnsworth returned to his office, leaving Don staring helplessly at the package in his hands.

"For Heaven's sake, get busy!" exclaimed Miss Winthrop.

"But where can I find Mr. Hayden?" inquired Don.

"Get out of the office and look up the firm in a directory," she returned sharply. "But hustle out of here just as if you did know."

Don seized his hat and obeyed. He found himself on the street, quite as ignorant of where to find a directory as he was of where to find Mr. Hayden, of Hayden & Wigglesworth. But in rounding a corner — still at full speed — he ran into a messenger boy.

"Take me to the office of Hayden & Wigglesworth and there's a quarter in it for you," he offered.

"I'm on," nodded the boy.

The office was less than a five minutes' walk away. In another two minutes Don had left his package with Mr. Hayden's clerk and was back again in his own office.

"Snappy work," Miss Winthrop compli-

mented him. "The closing prices must be out by now. You'd better look them over."

"Closing prices of what?" he inquired.

"The market, of course. Ask Eddie — the boy at the ticker. He'll give you a sheet."

So Don went over and asked Eddie, and was handed a list of closing quotations — which, for all he was concerned, might have been football signals. However, he sat down and looked them over, and continued to look them over until Farnsworth passed him on his way home.

"You may as well go now," Farnsworth said. "You'll be here at nine to-morrow?"

"Nine to-morrow," nodded Don.

He returned to Miss Winthrop's desk.

"He says I may go now," he reported.

"Then I'd go," she advised.

"But I — I want to thank you."

"For Heaven's sake, don't!" she exploded. "I'm busy."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

He took the Subway back to the Grand Central, and walked from there to the club. Here he found a message from Frances: —

Dad sent up a box for the theater to-night. Will you come to dinner and go with us?

When Don, after dressing, left his house for the Stuyvesants' that evening, it was with a curious sense of self-importance. He now had the privilege of announcing to his friends that he was in business in New York — in the banking business — with Carter, Rand & Seagraves, as a matter of fact. He walked with a freer stride and swung his stick with a jauntier air than he had yesterday.

He was full of this when, a few minutes before dinner, Frances swept down the stairs.

"I'm glad you could come, Don," she said. "But where in the world have you been all day?"

"Downtown," he answered. "I'm with Carter, Rand & Seagraves now."

He made the announcement with considerable pride.

"Poor Don!" she murmured. "But, if you're going to do that sort of thing, I suppose you might as well be with them as any one. I wonder if that Seagraves is Dolly Seagraves's father."

For a second he was disappointed — he had expected more enthusiasm from her.

"I have n't met the families of the firm yet," he answered.

"I thought you knew Dolly. I'll ask her up for my next afternoon, to meet you."

"But I can't come in the afternoon, Frances."

"How stupid! You're to be downtown all day?"

"From nine to three or later."

"I'm not sure I'm going to like that."

"Then you'll have to speak to Farnsworth," he laughed.

"Farnsworth?"

"He's the manager."

"I imagine he's very disagreeable. Oh, Don, please hurry and make your fortune and have it over with!"

"You ought to give me more than one day, anyhow."

"I'll give you till June," she smiled. "I really got sort of homesick for you to-day, Don."

"Honest?"

"Honest, Don. I've no business to tell you such a secret, but it's true."

"I'm glad you told me," he answered soberly. "What have you been doing all day?"

"I had a stupid morning at the tailor's, and a stupid bridge in the afternoon at the Martins'. Oh, I lost a disgraceful lot of money."

"How much?" he inquired.

She shook her head. "I won't tell; but that's why I told Dad he must take me to see something cheerful this evening."

"Tough luck," he sympathized.

They went in to dinner. Afterward the Stuyvesant car took them all to a vaudeville house, and there, from the rear of a box, Don watched with indifferent interest the usual vaudeville turns. To tell the truth, he would have been better satisfied to have sat at the piano at home and had Frances sing to him. There were many things he had wished to talk over with her. He had not told her about the other men he had met, his adventure on his first business assignment, his search for a place to lunch, or — Miss Winthrop. Until that moment he had not thought of her himself.

A singing team made their appearance and

began to sing sentimental ballads concerned with apple blossoms in Normandy. Don's thoughts went back, strangely enough, to the white-tiled restaurant in the alley. He smiled as he contrived a possible title for a popular song of this same nature. "The White-Tiled Restaurant in the Alley" it might read, and it might have something to do with "Sally." Perhaps Miss Winthrop's first name was Sally — it fitted her well enough. She had been funny about that chocolate éclair. And she had lent him two dollars. Unusual incident, that! He wondered where she was to-night — where she went after she left the office at night. Perhaps she was here. He leaned forward to look at the faces of people in the audience. Then the singing stopped, and a group of Japanese acrobats occupied the stage.

Frances turned, suppressing a yawn.

"I suppose one of them will hang by his teeth in a minute," she observed. "I wish he would n't. It makes me ache."

"It is always possible to leave," he suggested.

"But Mother so enjoys the pictures."

"Then, by all means, let's stay."

"They always put them at the end. Oh, dear me, I don't think I shall ever come again."

"I enjoyed the singing," he confessed.

"Oh, Don, it was horrible!"

"Still, that song about the restaurant in the alley—"

"The *what?*" she exclaimed.

"Was n't it that or was it apple blossoms? Anyhow, it was good."

"Of course there's no great difference between restaurants in alleys and apple blossoms in Normandy!" she commented.

"Not so much as you'd think," he smiled.

It was eleven before they were back at the house. Then Stuyvesant wanted a rarebit and Frances made it, so that it was after one before Don reached his own home.

Not until Nora, in obedience to a note he had left downstairs for her, called him at seven-thirty the next morning did Don realize he had kept rather late hours for a business man. Bit by bit, the events of yesterday came back to him; and in the midst of it, quite the central figure, stood Miss Winthrop. It was as if she

were warning him not to be late. He jumped from bed.

But, even at that, it was a quarter past eight before he came downstairs. Nora was anxiously waiting for him.

"You did not order breakfast, sir," she reminded him.

"Why, that's so," he admitted.

"Shall I prepare it for you now?"

"Never mind. I have n't time to wait, anyway. You see, I must be downtown at nine. I'm in business, Nora."

"Yes, sir; but you should eat your breakfast, sir."

He shook his head. "I think I'll try going without breakfast this week. Besides, I did n't send up any provisions."

Nora appeared uneasy. She did not wish to be bold, and yet she did not wish her late master's son to go downtown hungry.

"An egg and a bit of toast, sir? I'm sure the cook could spare that."

"Out of her own breakfast?"

"I — I beg your pardon, sir," stammered Nora; "but it's all part of the house, is n't it?"

"No," he answered firmly. "We must play the game fair, Nora."

"And dinner, sir?"

"Dinner? Let's not worry about that as early in the morning as this."

He started to leave, but at the door turned again.

"If you should want me during the day, you'll find me at my office with Carter, Rand & Seagraves. Better write that down."

"I will, sir."

"Good-day, Nora."

Don took the Subway this morning, in company with several hundred thousand others for whom this was as much a routine part of their daily lives as the putting on of a hat. He had seen all these people coming and going often enough before, but never before had he felt himself as coming and going with them. Now he was one of them. He did not resent it. In fact, he felt a certain excitement about it. But it was new — almost foreign.

It was with some difficulty that he found his way from the station to his office. This so delayed him that he was twenty minutes late.

Miss Winthrop, who was hard at work when he entered, paused a second to glance at the watch pinned to her dress.

"I'm only twenty minutes late," he apologized to her.

"A good many things can happen around Wall Street in twenty minutes," she answered.

"I guess I'll have to leave the house a little earlier."

"I'd do something to get here on time," she advised. "Out late last night?"

"Not very. I was in bed a little after one."

"I thought so."

"Why?"

"You look it."

She brought the conversation to an abrupt end by resuming her work.

He wanted to ask her in just what way he looked it. He felt a bit hollow; but that was because he had n't breakfasted. His eyes, too, were still a little heavy; but that was the result, not of getting to bed late, but of getting up too early.

She, on the other hand, appeared fresher than she had yesterday at noon. Her eyes were

brighter and there was more color in her cheeks. Don had never seen much of women in the forenoon. As far as he was concerned, Frances did not exist before luncheon. But what experience he had led him to believe that Miss Winthrop was an exception — that most women continued to freshen toward night and were at their best at dinner-time.

"Mr. Pendleton." It was Eddie. "Mr. Farnsworth wants to see you in his office."

Farnsworth handed Don a collection of circulars describing some of the securities the firm was offering.

"Better familiarize yourself with these," he said briefly. "If there is anything in them you don't understand, ask one of the other men."

That was all. In less than three minutes Don was back again at Powers's desk. He glanced through one of the circulars, which had to do with a certain electric company offering gold bonds at a price to net four and a half. He read it through once and then read it through again. It contained a great many figures — figures running into the millions, whose effect was to make twenty-five dollars a week shrink into

insignificance. On the whole, it was decidedly depressing reading — the more so because he did not understand it.

He wondered what Miss Winthrop did when she was tired, where she lived and how she lived, if she played bridge, if she spent her summers abroad, who her parents were, whether she was eighteen or twenty-two or -three, and if she sang. All of which had nothing to do with the affairs of the company that wished to dispose of its gold bonds at a price to net four and a half.

At twelve Miss Winthrop rose from her machine and sought her hat in the rear of the office. At twelve-five she came back, passed him as if he had been an empty chair, and went out the door. At twelve-ten he followed. He made his way at once to the restaurant in the alley. She was not in the chair she had occupied yesterday, but farther back. Happily, the chair next to her was empty.

"Will you hold this for me?" he asked.

"Better drop your hat in it," she suggested rather coldly.

He obeyed the suggestion, and a minute later returned with a cup of coffee and an egg sand-

wich. She was gazing indifferently across the room as he sat down, but he called her attention to his lunch.

"You see, I got one of these things to-day."

"So?"

"Do you eat it with a fork or pick it up in your fingers?" he asked.

She turned involuntarily to see if he was serious. She could not tell, but it was a fact he looked perplexed.

"Oh, pick it up in your fingers," she exclaimed. "But look here; are you coming here every day?"

"Sure," he nodded. "Why not?"

"Because, if you are, I'm going to find another place."

"You — what?" he gasped.

"I'm going to find another place."

The sandwich was halfway to his lips. He put it down again.

"What have I done?" he demanded.

She was avoiding his eyes.

"Oh, it is n't you," she answered. "But if the office ever found out — "

"Well," he insisted.

"It would make a lot of talk, that's all," she concluded quickly. "I can't afford it."

"Whom would they talk about?"

"Oh, they would n't talk about you — that's sure."

"They would talk about you?"

"They certainly would."

"What would they say?"

"You think it over," she replied. "The thing you want to remember is that I'm only a stenographer there, and you — well, if you make good you'll be a member of the firm some day."

"I don't see what that has to do with where you eat or where I eat."

"It has n't, as long as we don't eat at the same place. Can't you see that?"

She raised her eyes and met his.

"I see now," he answered soberly. "They'll think I'm getting fresh with you?"

"They'll think I'm letting you get fresh," she answered, lowering her eyes.

"But you don't think that yourself?"

"I don't know," she answered slowly. "I used to think I could tell; but now — oh, I don't know!"

"But good Heavens! you've been a regular little trump to me. You've even lent me the money to buy my lunches with. Do you think any man could be so low down —"

"Those things are n't fit to eat when they're cold," she warned him.

He shoved his plate aside and leaned toward her. "Do you think —"

"No, no, no!" she exclaimed. "Only, it is n't what *I* think that matters."

"That's the only thing in this case that does matter," he returned.

"You wait until you know Blake," she answered.

"Of course, if any one is to quit here, it is I," he said.

"You'd better stay where you are," she answered. "I know a lot of other places just like this."

"Well, I can find them, can't I?"

She laughed — a contagious little laugh.

"I'm not so sure," she replied.

"You don't think much of my ability, do you?" he returned, somewhat nettled.

She lifted her eyes at that.

"If you want to know the truth," she said, "I do. And I've seen a lot of 'em come and go."

He reacted curiously to this unexpected praise. His color heightened and unconsciously he squared his shoulders.

"Thanks," he said. "Then you ought to trust me to be able to find another lunch-place. Besides, you forget I found this myself. Are you going to have an éclair to-day?"

She nodded and started to rise.

"Sit still; I'll get it for you."

Before she could protest he was halfway to the counter. She sat back in her chair with an expression that was half-frown and half-smile.

When he came back she slipped a nickel upon the arm of his chair.

"What's this for?" he demanded.

"For the éclair, of course."

"You — you need n't have done that."

"I'll pay my own way, thank you," she answered, her face hardening a little.

"Now you're offended again?"

"No; only — oh, can't you see we — I must find another place?"

"No, I don't," he answered.

"Then that proves it," she replied. "And now I'm going back to the office."

He rose at once to go with her.

"Please to sit right where you are for five minutes," she begged.

He sat down again and watched her as she hurried out the door. The moment she disappeared the place seemed curiously empty — curiously empty and inane. He stared at the white-tiled walls, at the heaps of pastry upon the marble counter, prepared as for wholesale. Yet, as long as she sat here with him, he had noticed none of those details. For all he was conscious of his surroundings, they might have been lunching together in that subdued, pink-tinted room where he so often took Frances.

He started as he thought of her. Then he smiled contentedly. He must have Frances to lunch with him in the pink-tinted dining-room next Saturday.

CHAPTER VI

TWO GIRLS

THAT night, when Miss Winthrop took her place in the Elevated on her way to the uptown room that made her home, she dropped her evening paper in her lap, and, chin in hand, stared out of the window. That was decidedly unusual. It was so unusual that a young man who had taken this same train with her month after month, and who had rather a keen eye for such things, noticed for the first time that she had in profile rather an attractive face. She was wondering just how different this Pendleton was from the other men she met. Putting aside for a moment all generalizations affecting the sex as a whole, he was not like any of them. For the first time in a long while she found herself inclined to accept a man for just what he appeared to be. It was difficult not to believe in Pendleton's eyes, and still more difficult not to believe in his smile, which made her smile back. And yet, if she had learned anything, those were

the very things in a man she had learned to question.

Not that she was naturally cynical, but her downtown experience had left her very skeptical about her ability to judge men from such details. Blake, for instance, could smile as innocently as a child and meet any woman's eyes without flinching. But there was this difference between Blake and Pendleton: the latter was new to New York. He was fresh to the city, as four years ago she had been. In those days she had dreamed of such a man as Pendleton — a dream that she was sure she had long since forgotten. Four years was a long while. It gave her rather a motherly feeling as she thought of Pendleton from that distance. And she rather enjoyed that. It left her freer to continue thinking of him. This she did until she was almost carried beyond her street.

After that she almost forgot to stop at the delicatessen store for her rolls and butter and cold meat. She hurried with them to her room — hurried because she was anxious to reach the place where she was more at liberty than anywhere else on earth. She tossed aside

her hat and coat and sat by the radiator to warm her hands.

She wondered if Pendleton would go the same way Blake had gone. It was so very easy to go the one way or the other. Farnsworth himself never helped. His theory was to allow new men to work out their own salvation, and to fire them if they did not. He had done that with young Brown, who came in last year; and it had seemed to her then a pity — though she had never liked Brown. This was undoubtedly what he would do with Pendleton.

But supposing — well, why should n't she take an interest in Pendleton to the extent of preventing such a finish if she could? There need be nothing personal in such an interest; she could work it out as an experiment.

Miss Winthrop, now thoroughly warm, began to prepare her supper. She spread a white cloth upon her table, which was just large enough to seat one. She placed upon this one plate, one cup and saucer, one knife and fork and spoon. It was a very simple matter to prepare supper for one. She sliced her small portion of cold meat and placed this on the table. She removed

her rolls from a paper bag and placed them beside the cold meat. By this time the hot water was ready, and she took a pinch of tea, put it in her tea-ball, and poured hot water over it in her cup. Then she took her place in the one chair.

But, oddly enough, although there was no place for him, another seemed to be with her in the room.

"Let me have your engagement-book a moment," Frances requested.

Don complied. He had taken his dinner that night at the dairy lunch, and after returning to the house to dress had walked to his fiancée's.

Frances puckered her brows.

"You are to have a very busy time these next few weeks," she informed him. "Let me see — to-day is Wednesday. On Friday we are to go to the Moores'. Evelyn's débutante dance, you know."

She wrote it in his book.

"On Saturday we go to the opera. The Warringtons have asked us to a box party."

She wrote that.

"Next Wednesday comes the Stanley cotillion. Have you received your invitation?"

"Have n't seen it," he answered.

"The Stanleys are always unpardonably late, but I helped Elise make out her list. On the following Friday we dine at the Westons'."

She wrote that.

"On the following Saturday I'm to give a box party at the opera — the Moores and Warringtons."

She added that, and looked over the list.

"And I suppose, after going to this trouble, I'll have to remind you all over again on the day of each event."

"Oh, I don't know; but —" He hesitated.

"Well?" she demanded.

"Seems to me we are getting pretty gay, are n't we?"

"Don't talk like an old man!" she scolded. "So far, this has been a very stupid season."

"But —"

"Well?"

"You know, now I'm in business —"

"Please don't remind me of that any more than is necessary," she interrupted.

"Oh, all right; only, I do have to get up in the morning."

"Why remind me of that? It's disagreeable enough having to think of it even occasionally."

"But I do, you know."

"I know it, Don. Honestly I do."

She seated herself on the arm of his chair, with an arm about his neck and her cheek against his hair.

"And I think it quite too bad," she assured him — "which is why I don't like to talk about it."

She sprang to her feet again.

"Now, Don, you must practice with me some of the new steps. You'll get very rusty if you don't."

"I'd rather hear you sing," he ventured.

"This is much more important," she replied.

She placed a Maxixe record on the Victrola that stood by the piano; then she held out her arms to him.

"Poor old hard-working Don!" she laughed as he rose.

It was true that it was as poor old hard-

working Don he moved toward her. But there was magic in her lithe young body; there was magic in her warm hand; there was magic in her swimming eyes. As he fell into the rhythm of the music and breathed the incense of her hair, he was whirled into another world — a world of laughter and melody and care-free fairies. But the two most beautiful fairies of all were her two beautiful eyes, which urged him to dance faster and faster, and which left him in the end stooping, with short breaths, above her upturned lips.

CHAPTER VII

ROSES

When Miss Winthrop changed her mind and consented not to seek a new luncheon place, she was taking a chance, and she knew it. If ever Blake heard of the new arrangement, — and he was sure to hear of it if any one ever saw her there with Don, — she was fully aware how he would interpret it to the whole office.

She was taking a chance, and she knew it — knew it with a curious sense of elation. She was taking a chance for him. This hour at noon was the only opportunity she had of talking to Don. If she let that pass, then she could do nothing more for him. She must stand back and watch him go his own way, as others had gone their way.

For one thing was certain: she could allow no further conversations in the office. She had been forced to stop those, and had warned him that he must not speak to her again there except on business, and that he must not sit at

Powers's desk and watch her at work. When he had challenged her for a reason, she had blushed; then she had replied simply: —

"It is n't business."

So, when on Saturday morning Don came in heavy-eyed for lack of sleep after the Moore dance, she merely looked up and nodded and went on with her work. But she studied him a dozen times when he did not know she was studying him, and frowned every time he suppressed, with difficulty, a yawn. He appeared tired — dead tired.

For the first time in months she found herself looking forward to the noon hour. She glanced at her watch at eleven-thirty, at eleven-forty-five, and again at five minutes before twelve.

To-day she reserved a seat for him in the little lunch-room. But at fifteen minutes past twelve, when Don usually strode in the door, he had not come. At twenty minutes past he had not come. If he did not come in another five minutes she resolved to make no further effort to keep his place — either to-day or at any future time. At first she was irritated; then she was worried. It was possible he was

lunching with Blake. If he began that — well, she would be freed of all further responsibility, for one thing. But at this point Don entered. He made no apologies for having kept her waiting, but deposited in the empty chair, as he went off for his sandwich and coffee, a long, narrow box done up in white paper. She gave him time to eat a portion of his lunch before she asked: —

"Out late again last night?"

"Went to a dance," he nodded.

She was relieved to hear that. It was a better excuse than some, but still it was not a justifiable excuse for a man who needed all his energies.

"You did n't get enough sleep, then."

"I should say not," Don admitted cheerfully. "In bed at four and up at seven."

"You look it."

"And I feel it."

"You can't keep that up long."

"Sunday 's coming, and I'm going to sleep all day," he declared.

"But what's the use of getting into that condition?" she inquired.

He thought a moment.

"Well, I don't suppose a man can cut off everything just because he's in business."

"That's part of the business — at the beginning," she returned.

"To work all the time?"

"To work all the time," she nodded. "I wish I had your chance."

"My chance to work?" he laughed.

"Your chance to get ahead," she answered. "It's all so easy — for a man!"

"Easy?"

"You don't have to do anything but keep straight and keep at work. You ought to have taken those circulars home with you last night and learned them by heart."

"I've read 'em. But, hang it all, they don't mean anything."

"Then find out what they mean. Keep at it until you do find out. The firm is n't going to pay you for what you *don't* know."

"But last night — well, a man has to get around a little bit."

"Around where?" she questioned him.

"Among his friends. Does n't he?"

She hesitated.

"It seems to me you'll have to choose between dances and business."

"Eh?"

She nodded.

"Between dances and business. I tell you, this next six months is going to count a lot on how you make good with Farnsworth."

"Well, he is n't the only one," he said.

"He's the only one in this office — I know what I'm talking about."

"But outside the office —"

She put down her fork.

"I don't know why I'm mixing up in your business," she declared earnestly. "Except that I've been here three years now, and have seen men come and go. Every time they've gone it has been clear as daylight why they went. Farnsworth is square. He has n't much heart in him, but he's square. And he has eyes in the back of his head."

She raised her own eyes and looked swiftly about the room as if she half-expected to discover him here.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

She did not answer his question, but as she ran on again she lowered her voice: —

"You've been in his office to-day?"

"He gave me some more circulars," Don admitted.

"Then you'd better believe he knew you did n't get to bed last night until 4 A.M. And you'd better believe he has tucked that away in his mind somewhere."

Don appeared worried.

"He did n't say anything."

"No, he did n't say anything. He does n't say anything until he has a whole collection of those little things. Even then he does n't say much; but what he does say — counts."

"You don't think he's getting ready to fire me?" he asked anxiously.

"He's always getting ready," she answered. "He's always getting ready to fire or advance you. That's the point," she went on more earnestly. "What I don't understand is why the men who come in here are n't getting ready too. I don't see why they don't play the game. I might stay with the firm twenty years and I'd still be pounding a typewriter. But you —"

She raised her eyes to his. She saw that Don's had grown less dull, and her own warmed with this initial success.

"You used to play football, did n't you?" she asked.

"A little."

"Then you ought to know something about doing things hard; and you ought to know something about keeping in training."

"But look here, it seems to me you take this mighty seriously."

"Farnsworth does," she corrected. "That's why he's getting ten thousand a year."

The figures recalled a vivid episode.

"Ten thousand a year," he repeated after her. "Is that what he draws?"

"That's what they say. Anyway, he's worth it."

"And you think I — I might make a job like that?"

"I'll bet I'd try for it if I were in your boots," she answered earnestly.

"I'll bet you'd land it if you were in my boots." He raised his coffee-cup. "Here's to the ten thousand a year," he drank.

Miss Winthrop rose. She had talked more than she intended, and was somewhat irritated at herself. If, for a second, she thought she had accomplished something, she did not think so now, as he too rose and smiled at her. He handed her the pasteboard box.

"Your two dollars is in there," he explained.

She looked perplexed.

"Shall I wait five minutes?"

"Yes," she answered, as he thrust the box into her hands.

That box worried her all the afternoon. Not having a chance to open it, she hid it beneath her desk, where it distracted her thoughts until evening. Of course she could not open it on the Elevated, so it lay in her lap, still further to distract her thoughts on the way home. It seemed certain that a two-dollar bill could not occupy all that space.

She did not wait even to remove her hat before opening it in her room. She found a little envelope containing her two-dollar bill nestling in five dollars' worth of roses.

It was about as foolish a thing as she had ever known a man to do.

ROSES

She placed the flowers on the table when she had her supper. All night long they filled the room with their fragrance.

CHAPTER VIII

A MAN OF AFFAIRS

WHEN, with some eighteen dollars in his pocket, Don on Sunday ordered Nora to prepare for him on that day and during the following week a breakfast of toast, eggs, and coffee, he felt very much a man of affairs. He was paying for his own sustenance, and with the first money he had ever earned. He drew from his pocket a ten-dollar bill, a five-dollar bill, a two-dollar bill, and some loose change.

"Pick out what you need," he ordered, as he held the money toward her.

"I don't know how much it will be, sir. I'll ask the cook, sir."

"Very well; ask the cook. About dinners — I think I'd better wait until I see how I'm coming out. Dinners don't matter so much, any way, because they come after I'm through work."

Don ate his breakfast in the dining-room before the open fire, as his father used to do.

In smoking-jacket and slippered feet, he enjoyed this as a rare luxury — even this matter of breakfasting at home, which until now had been merely a negative detail of routine.

When he had finished he drew his chair closer to the flames and lighted a cigarette. He had been cutting down on cigarettes. He had always bought them by the hundred; he was now buying them by the box. Until this week he never realized that they represented money. He was paying now twenty-five cents for a box of ten; and twenty-five cents, as he had learned in the restaurant in the alley, was a sum of money with tremendous possibilities. It would buy, for one thing, five egg sandwiches; and five egg sandwiches would keep a man from being uncomfortably hungry a good many hours.

Thus a quarter, from being merely an odd piece of loose change, took on a vital, tangible character of its own. Translated into smokes, it gave a smoke a new value. He had started in to make a box of cigarettes last a day; but he was now resolved to make them last two days. This allowed him one after each meal and two in the evening.

If at first he had considered this a hardship, he was beginning to appreciate the fact that it had its compensating advantages. This morning, for instance, he felt that he had never tasted such good tobacco in his life. Like his breakfast, it was a pleasure to be prolonged — to give his thought to. He smoked slowly and carefully and keenly. With his head against the back of his chair, he watched the white cloudlets curl upward after he had inhaled their fragrance. This was no dull habit indulged in automatically.

In this moment of indulgence his thoughts turned to Miss Winthrop. It was nearing twelve, and perhaps this had something to do with it. He was going to miss that luncheon hour. He had come to look forward to it as quite the most interesting event of the day. From his comfortable position before the fire, he wondered why.

It was impossible to say she had any definite physical attractions, although her eyes were not bad. They piqued a man's curiosity, those eyes. One remembered them. That was true also of her mouth. Don had no very definite notion of

its exact shape, but he remembered how it surprised one by changing from the tenderness of a young girl's mouth to the firmness of a man's a dozen times in the course of a few minutes' conversation.

It was quarter-past twelve. If he had known her telephone number he would have called her up now, just to say "Hello." He would be taking a chance, however; for, as likely as not, she would inquire what he was doing, and would, he felt sure, scold him for having so late a breakfast.

Odd, that a woman should be so energetic! He had always thought of them as quite the opposite. Leisureliness was a prerogative of the sex. He had always understood that it was a woman's right to pamper herself.

Undoubtedly she would object to his sitting on here before the open fire. Farnsworth would not waste a morning like this — he seemed to hear her telling him so. If he wanted that ten thousand a year, he ought to be working on those circulars. A man was not paid for what he did n't know. Here, with nothing else to do, was a good time to get after them. Well, he had gone so far as to bring them home with him.

He rose reluctantly, went upstairs to his room, and brought them down. He began on the electric company which was offering gold bonds at a price to net four and a half per cent. Then Nora came in to call him to the telephone.

"Who is it, Nora?"

"Miss Stuyvesant, sir."

"Oh, yes."

He hurried to the telephone.

"Good-morning, Frances."

"Dad and Mother have gone to church and it's very stupid here," she complained. "Can't you come over?"

He hesitated the fraction of a second.

"Oh, of course, — if you don't want to, —" she began quickly.

"It is n't that, Frances. Of course I want to come; only, there were some papers I brought home from the office —"

"Well?"

"I can go over them some other time. I'll be right up."

A discovery that encouraged Don the follow-

ing week was that by some unconscious power of absorption he grew sufficiently familiar with the financial jargon of the office to feel that it really was within the possibilities that some day he might understand it fully. He found several opportunities to talk with Powers, and the latter, after recovering from his surprise at the primitive nature of some of Don's questions about notes and bonds, went to some trouble to answer them. Not only that, but he mentioned certain books that might supply fuller and more fundamental information.

"I know these sound like fool questions," Don apologized, "but I've never been down in this end of the town much."

"That's all right," replied Powers. "Come to me any time you're stuck."

After Powers went out, Don sat down and tried to recall some of the things he had been told. He remembered some of them and some of them he did n't. But that day at lunch Miss Winthrop handed him a stenographic report of the entire conversation. Don looked over it in amazement. It was in the form of question and answer.

Mr. Pendleton: Say, old man, what is a gold bond, anyway?

Mr. Powers: I beg your pardon?

And so on down to Don's final apology.

Mr. Pendleton: I know these sound like fool questions —

Mr. Powers: That's all right —

"Read it over in your spare time," advised Miss Winthrop; "then you won't ask him the same questions twice."

"But how in thunder did you get this?" he inquired.

"I was n't busy just then, and took it down. I knew you'd forget half he told you."

"It was mighty good of you," he answered. "But I wish you had left out my talk. Now that I see it in type, it sounds even more foolish than I thought it was."

"I've seen a lot of things that did n't turn out well in type," she nodded. "But you need n't read that part of it. What Powers said was worth while. He knows what he's talking about, and that's why he's the best bond salesman in the house."

"What sort of a salary does *he* draw?"

"I don't know," she answered. "And if I were you I'd forget the salary end of my job for a while."

"It's a mighty important end," he declared.

"I don't see it," she returned frankly. "I suppose you're starting on twenty-five?"

"That's all," he admitted.

"It's all you're worth. Any one to support besides yourself?"

"No."

"Then what you worrying about?"

"But, good Heavens, a man can't live on that — any length of time."

"Can't? I know men who support a wife and children on less."

"Eh?"

"And do it decently," she nodded. "I live on half of that myself."

"You?"

"Of course. Did you think I drew a salary like Farnsworth?"

She laughed at his open astonishment. It appeared genuine.

"You live on half of twenty-five dollars a week?" he repeated.

She did not care to pursue the subject. It was a bit too personal.

"So do hundreds of thousands of others," she informed him. "On that and less than that. Now, you put that paper away in your pocket, and don't ask Powers another question until you know it by heart. Then get after him again. When you run across something you don't know, why don't you write it down?"

He took out his engagement-book on the spot and made an entry.

"I've written down that you say it's possible to live on twenty-five dollars a week," he informed her, as he replaced the book in his pocket.

"Don't be silly," she warned. "You'd better write down something about not worrying about your salary at all."

"I'll do that," he returned.

He took out his engagement-book again and scribbled a line.

"Miss Winthrop says not to worry about my salary."

"CAN'T? I KNOW MEN WHO SUPPORT A WIFE AND CHILDREN ON LESS"

"I did n't say it," she protested.

"Them's your very words."

"I mean —" she grew really confused. "I mean — you need n't put it down that I said it. You ought to say it to yourself."

He shook his head. "That's too deep for me."

"Then let's drop the subject," she answered curtly. "Only don't get the idea that it's I who am worrying about your salary, one way or the other."

"No need of getting peeved about it," he suggested.

"Not in the slightest," she agreed.

But she did not wait for her éclair, and went back to the office in anything but a good humor.

On the whole, Miss Winthrop was rather disappointed in him as a result of this last interview — the more so because he had begun the day so well. Her hopes had risen high at the way he approached Powers, and at the seriousness with which he had listened to what Powers had to say. He had acted like a man eager to learn. Then he had spoiled it all by placing undue emphasis on the salary end.

This new development in Pendleton came as a surprise. It did not seem consistent with his nature as she read it in his eyes. It was not in character. It left her doubting her judgment about him along other lines. She did not object to his ambition. That was essential. He ought to work for Farnsworth's position — but for the position, not the salary. The position stood for power based upon ability. That was the sort of success she would be keen about if she were a man.

Curious, too, that Mr. Pendleton should be so keen about money in this one direction. She had thought his tendency all the other way, and had made a mental note that sometime she must drive home to him a few facts about having a decent respect for money. A man who would return the loan of a two-dollar bill in five dollars' worth of roses was not the sort of man one expected to have a vaulting ambition for thousands for their own sake. One thing was sure — he was not the type of man who ought to occupy so much of her attention on a busy afternoon.

At a few minutes before five, just as Miss

Winthrop was jabbing the last pin into her hat, a messenger boy hurried into the office with a parcel bearing a noticeable resemblance to a one-pound candy box. He inquired of Eddie for Miss Winthrop, and Eddie, with considerable ceremony, escorted the boy to the desk of that astonished young woman.

"Sign here," the boy ordered.

Miss Winthrop gave a swift glance around the office. Mr. Pendleton was at work at Powers's desk and did n't even look up. It was a remarkable exhibition of concentration on his part. Blake, however, swung around in his chair and raised his brows.

Miss Winthrop seized the pencil and wrote her name, dotting the "i" and crossing the "t" with vicious jabs. Then she picked up the box and hurried toward the door.

"From a devoted admirer?" inquired Blake, as she passed him.

Don saw the color spring to Miss Winthrop's cheeks, but she hurried on without a word in reply. He understood now what it was she did not like about Blake. Don was not at all of an aggressive nature, but at that moment he could

have struck the man with the greatest satisfaction. It seemed the only adequate way of expressing himself. Blake was still smiling.

"Sort of caught her with the goods that time, eh?" observed Blake.

"I don't get you," answered Don.

"Candy by messenger? Well, I've been looking for it. And when those haughty ones do fall, believe me, they fall hard."

"Maybe," answered Don. "But I'll bet you five dollars to a quarter you're wrong about her."

Blake's eyes narrowed a trifle.

"I'll take you," he answered. "What's your proof?"

"I sent her that stuff myself."

"You? Holy smoke, that's going some!"

"I sent her that to pay for some typewriting she did for me and because I knew she would n't take any money."

"I lose. Come out and have a drink?"

"Thanks," answered Don. "I'm on my way uptown. Give that quarter to Eddie."

CHAPTER IX

IT WILL NEVER DO

If Miss Winthrop ever had more than a nodding acquaintance with Mr. Pendleton, she gave no indication of that fact when she came in the next morning. With a face as blank as a house closed for the season, she clicked away at her typewriter until noon, and then hurried out to lunch as if that were a purely business transaction also. Don followed a little sooner than usual. The little restaurant was not at all crowded to-day, but she was not there. He waited ten minutes, and as he waited the conviction grew that she did not intend to come.

Don went out and began an investigation. He visited five similar places in the course of the next fifteen minutes, and in the last one he found her. She was seated in a far corner, and she was huddled up as if trying to make herself as inconspicuous as possible. As he strode to her side with uplifted hat, she shrank away like a hunted thing finding itself trapped.

"What did you run away for?" he demanded.

"What did you hunt me up for?" she replied.

"Because I wanted to see you."

"And I came here because I did *not* want to see you."

"Now, look here —" he began.

"So I should think you'd go along and leave me alone," she interrupted.

"If I did that, then I'd never know what the trouble is all about," he explained.

"Well, what of it?"

"May I sit down?"

There was an empty chair next to her.

"I can't prevent you, but I've told you I want to be alone."

"When you look that way, you're just as much alone as if I were n't here," he returned, as he took the chair. "And every one knows it."

She gave a swift glance about the room, as if expecting to find half the crowd looking at her.

"Maybe they are too polite to let on," he continued; "but I know just what they are

saying to themselves. They are saying, 'She certainly has n't much use for him. You'd think he'd take the tip and get out.' "

"You don't seem to care much, then, about what they say."

"I don't care a hang," he admitted.

She pushed her plate away as if ready to go.

"Wait a minute," he pleaded. "It does n't seem like you to go off and leave a man in the dark. How in thunder am I going to know any better next time if you don't tell me where I made the break?"

"I don't believe you'd know if I did tell you," she answered more gently.

"The least you can do is to try."

She did not want to tell him. If he was sincere — and the longer she talked with him, the more convinced she was that this was the case — then she did not wish to disillusionize him.

"The least you can do is to give me a chance," he persisted.

"The mistake came in the beginning, Mr. Pendleton," she said, with an effort. "And it was all my fault. You — you seemed so different from a lot of men who come into the

office that I — well, I wanted to see you get started straight. In the three years I've been there I've picked up a lot of facts that are n't much use to me because — because I'm just Miss Winthrop. So I thought I could pass them on."

"That was mighty white of you," he nodded.

The color flashed into her cheeks.

"I thought I could do that much without interfering in any other way with either of our lives."

"Well?"

"There were two or three things I did n't reckon with," she answered.

"What were they?" he demanded.

"Blake is one of them."

"Blake?" His face brightened with sudden understanding. "Then the trouble is all about that box of candy?"

"You should n't have sent it. You should have known better than to send it. You — had no right."

"But that was nothing. You were so darned good to me about the typewriting and it was all I could think of."

"So, you see," she concluded, "it won't do. It won't do at all."

"I don't see," he returned.

"Then it's because you did n't see the way Blake looked at me," she said.

"Yes, I saw," he answered. "I could have hit him for it. But I fixed that."

"You — fixed that?" she gasped.

"I certainly did. I told him I sent the box, and told him why."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Then they'll all know, and — what am I going to do? Oh, what am I going to do?"

It was a pitiful cry. He did not understand why it was so intense, because he did not see what she saw — the gossip increasing in maliciousness; the constant watching and nods and winks, until in the end it became intolerable either to her or to Farnsworth. Nor was that the possible end. To leave an office under these conditions was a serious matter — a matter so serious as to affect her whole future.

"Now, see here," he pleaded. "Don't take it so hard. You're making too much of it. Blake is n't going to talk any more. If he does —"

She raised her head.

"If he does, there is n't anything you can do about it."

"I'll bet there is."

"No — no — *no*. There is n't. I know! But you must n't come here any more. And you must n't talk to me any more. Then perhaps they'll forget."

He grew serious.

"It seems too bad if it's got to be that way," he answered.

"I ought to have known," she said.

"And I ought to have known, too. I was a fool to send that box into the office, but I wanted you to get it before you went home."

She raised her eyes to his a moment. Then a queer, tender expression softened her mouth.

"This is the end of it," she answered. "And now I'm glad you did not know any better."

She rose to go, and then she noticed that he had not lunched.

"I'll wait here until you come back with your sandwich," she said.

"I don't want a sandwich," he protested.

"Please hurry."

So she waited there until he came back with his lunch, and then she held out her hand to him.

"To-morrow you go to the old place," she said, "and I'll come here."

CHAPTER X

DICTATION

As far as Don was concerned, Miss Winthrop, instead of merely changing her lunch-place, might just as well have taken a steamer and sailed for Europe. He saw her at her desk every morning when he came in, and she always looked up and nodded — as she did, for that matter, to every one, including Blake. Then she turned to her work, and that was the end of her until the next morning. As far as he was able to judge, Miss Winthrop had completely and utterly forgotten the preceding weeks and even the incident that led to this disastrous climax.

But the situation that left her so unaffected got on Don's nerves. He was by nature too much of a social being to endure being left to himself very long. This lunching alone day after day was a dreary affair. The egg sandwiches began to pall upon his taste, and he felt that he could not have eaten an éclair had he been starving.

Sometimes he had only a cup of coffee, and then hurried out and wandered about the streets for the remainder of his hour. It was a long hour — a tedious hour. Most of the time he spent in the hope that, by some lucky chance, he might meet her. He did not hunt for her. He avoided her usual course. If he met her, it must be honestly by chance. But he never met her. He passed thousands of other young women, but he never met her. He used to return to the office sometimes doubting that she existed. But at one o'clock she was always there back of her machine.

He spent a good deal of time that week with Powers; and seemed to make some progress. He had now a definite knowledge of bonds and notes, and had even mastered, in a general way, the important details of some of the issues the house was handling. Twice he had taken home his papers and actually spent several hours upon them. Some of them he knew almost by heart. It was encouraging, but it would have been much more encouraging if he had been able to tell Miss Winthrop about it.

Somehow, he did not feel that he really

knew those things until he had told her he knew them. This was a curious frame of mind to be in, but it was a fact.

As far as he was concerned, he would have broken through this embargo long ago. But she had made him see, and see clearly, that he was *not* alone concerned. That was the whole trouble. If Blake talked only about him, and let it go at that, no harm would be done.

One Friday morning, toward eleven o'clock, Blake was out of the office, and Don had just finished a long talk with Powers, when he noticed that Miss Winthrop was not for the moment busy.

Don had an inspiration. He caught Powers just as he was about to leave.

"Look here, old man," he said in an undertone. "Is there any objection to my dictating a letter to Miss Winthrop?"

"Why, no," answered Powers. "She's there for the use of the staff."

"Thought I'd like to have her take down some of the things we've been talking about," he explained.

"Good idea," nodded Powers.

A minute later Miss Winthrop caught her breath as Don calmly walked to her desk, seated himself in a chair near her, and, producing a circular from his pocket, followed Blake's formula in asking:—

"Can you take a letter for me, Miss Winthrop?"

Almost as automatically as she answered Blake, she replied:—

"Certainly."

She reached for her notebook and pencil.

"*My dear Madame*," he began.

"Any address, Mr. Pendleton?"

"I don't know the exact address," he answered. "Just address it to the little restaurant in the alley."

She looked up.

"Mr. Pendleton!"

"To the little restaurant in the alley," he continued calmly. "Do you use Madame or Mademoiselle to an unmarried lady?" he inquired.

"I suppose this is a strictly business letter, or you would not be dictating it in office hours," she returned.

"I'll make it partly business," he nodded. "Ready?"

"Yes, Mr. Pendleton; but I don't think —"

"Who is introducing the personal element now?" he demanded.

"Ready, Mr. Pendleton."

My dear Madame: —

In reply to your advice that I acquire certain information relative to the securities which our firm is offering for sale, I beg to report that, after several talks with our Mr. Powers, I am prepared to give you any information you may desire.

"Try me on one of them?" he suggested, interrupting himself.

She raised her eyes and glanced anxiously around the office. Then she replied, as if reading from her notebook:—

"You forget, Mr. Pendleton, that I am taking a letter from you."

"Try me on one of the bonds," he insisted.

"You must n't act like this. Really, you must n't."

"Then I'll dictate some more. Ready?"

"Yes, Mr. Pendleton."

Our Miss Winthrop has just informed me that you have lost your interest in the whole matter.

"I did n't say that, Mr. Pendleton," she interrupted.

"What did you say, then?"

"I said that here in the office —"

"Oh, I see. Then scratch that sentence out."

She scratched it out.

"Have it read this way":—

Our Miss Winthrop informs me —

"Why need you bring me in at all?" she asked.

"Please don't interrupt."

— informs me that, owing to the lack of privacy in the office, you cannot discuss these matters here with me. Therefore I suggest that, as long as the luncheon hour is no longer convenient (for the same reasons), an arrangement be made whereby I may have the pleasure of dining with you some evening.

Miss Winthrop's brows came together.

"That is absolutely impossible!" she exclaimed.

If the idea does not appeal to you as a pleasure,—

he went on in the most impersonal of tones, —

perhaps you would be willing to consider it as a favor. Our Miss Winthrop informs me that the suggestion is impossible, but personally I don't see how anything could be more easily arranged. I would prefer Saturday evening, as on that date I am quite sure of being sufficiently well provided with ducats —

"You'd better save them," she interrupted.

— to insure a proper settlement with the waiter, —

he concluded his sentence.

Please let me know, then, where I may meet you on Saturday evening next.

"I told you that was quite impossible, Mr. Pendleton," she reminded him.

"You have n't told me why."

"There are a hundred reasons, and they can't be discussed here."

"That's it," he exclaimed triumphantly. "That's the whole trouble! We can't discuss

things here; so let's have our little dinner, and then there'll be all the chance in the world for you to tell me why you should n't come."

"You're absurd," she declared, with an involuntary smile.

Hoping for the favor of an early reply, —

he concluded, —

I beg to remain, Madame, most sincerely yours.

"Is that all?"

"You might add this postscript": —

I shall be at the Harvard Club at seven tonight, and a 'phone message there might be the most convenient way of replying.

"You don't really wish this typed, Mr. Pendleton?"

"I think it best," he replied as he rose, "unless you're too tired?"

"I'm never tired in business hours."

He returned to his desk; in a few seconds he heard the click of her machine.

Miss Winthrop did not stop at the delicatessen store that night, but went direct to her

room. She removed her hat and coat, and then sat down, chin in hands, to think this problem out.

She had missed Pendleton at the luncheon hour to a distinctly discomfiting degree. Naturally enough, she held him wholly responsible for that state of mind. Her life had been going along smoothly until he took it upon himself to come into the office. There had been no complications — no worries. She was earning enough to provide her with a safe retreat at night, and to clothe and feed her body; and this left her free, within certain accepted limits, to do as she pleased. This was her enviable condition when Mr. Pendleton came along — came from Heaven knew where, and took up his position near her desk. Then he had happened upon her at the little restaurant. And he was hungry and had only thirteen cents.

Perhaps right there was where she had made her mistake. It appeared that a woman could not be impersonally decent to a man without being held personally responsible. If she did not telephone him to-night, Pendleton would

be disappointed, and, being disappointed, Heaven only knew what he would do.

Under the circumstances, perhaps the wisest thing she could do was to meet him this once and make him clearly understand that she was never to meet him again. Pendleton was young, and he had not been long enough in the office to learn the downtown conventions. It was her fault that she had interested herself in him in the first place. It was her fault that she had allowed him to lunch with her. It was her fault that she had not been strictly businesslike with him in the office. So she would have dinner with him, and that would end it.

She had some tea and crackers, and at half past six put on her things and took a short walk. At seven she went into a public pay station, rang up the Harvard Club, and called for Mr. Pendleton. When she heard his voice her cheeks turned scarlet.

"If you insist I'll come to-morrow night," she informed him. "But—"

"Say, that's fine!" he interrupted.

"But I want you to understand that I don't approve of it."

"Oh, that's all right," he assured her. "Where may I call for you?"

"I — I don't know."

"Where do you live?"

She gave her address.

"Then I'll call there."

"Very well," she answered.

"Now, I call that mighty good of you," he ran on. "And —"

"Good-night," she concluded sharply.

She hung up the receiver and went back to her room in anything but a comfortable frame of mind.

CHAPTER XI

STEAK, WITH MUSHROOMS AND ADVICE

ALL of Miss Winthrop that occupied a desk in the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves on the next day was that for which Farnsworth was paying a weekly wage of twelve dollars. From the moment she entered that morning until she left that afternoon she made this perfectly clear to every one, including Don. But he also was busy. He had determined to make himself letter perfect on several bond issues. To this end he worked as hard as ever he had the day before a final examination. Besides this, Farnsworth found three or four errands for him to do, which he accomplished with dispatch. All that week Farnsworth had used him more and more — a distinctly encouraging sign. Don knew offhand now the location of some ten or fifteen offices, and was received in them as the recognized representative of Carter, Rand & Seagraves. In some places he was even known by name and addressed as

Mr. Pendleton — which filled him with considerable pride.

Don went direct to his house from the office, dressed, and went to the club.

"If any one rings me up, get the name," he ordered the doorman.

He avoided the crowd before the bar, and went upstairs to the library. He had brought his circulars with him, and now went over them once again in order to refresh his memory on some of the details. He was as anxious about getting this right as if Miss Winthrop were a prospective customer. Perhaps she might be. Women invested money, and if he was persuasive enough he might sell her a thousand-dollar bond. If he did not sell one to her, he might sell a few to Barton. Barton was always investing money — investing the Pendleton money, in fact. He might suggest Barton to Farnsworth, and drop around and see him to-morrow. Then Barton might suggest some one else. Before night he might in this way sell a couple of dozen of these bonds. He grew excited at the idea. He felt a new instinct stirring within him.

Don had never sold anything in his life except a few old clothes to second-hand clothes men in Cambridge. Strictly speaking, that was more in the nature of a gift than a sale: for a hundred dollars' worth of clothes, he received perhaps ten dollars, which he felt obliged to spend on his friends at the first opportunity.

Don had always been a buyer — a talent that required neither preparation nor development. Money had always passed from him to some one else. This was pleasant enough, but undramatic. There was no clash; it called for no effort on his part. To reverse all this and watch the money pass in the other direction — from some one else to him — impressed him as a pleasant variation.

At seven o'clock Don replaced his circulars in his pocket and went downstairs. Wadsworth passed him, and for a moment Don was tempted to stop him and try out his knowledge of bonds on him. The club, however, was hardly the place for that. But if ever he met Wadsworth on the street he would see what he could do. Wadsworth had never been more

than an acquaintance of his, but now he saw in him a prospective customer.

Don stepped into a taxi at the door and gave the driver the address supplied by Miss Winthrop. The cab after a little came to a stop before one of several entrances in a long brick block. Before Don had time to reach the door Miss Winthrop stepped out. He had rather hoped for an opportunity to meet some of her family.

"Am I late?" he inquired anxiously.

He could not account in any other way for the fact that she had hurried out before he had a chance to send in his card.

"No," she answered. "Did you come in that?"

She was looking at the taxi.

He nodded, and stood at the door, ready to assist her in.

"Well, you may send it away now," she informed him.

"But—"

"I won't go in it," she insisted firmly.

"Afraid it will break down?"

"Are you going to send it away?"

Without further argument he paid the driver and sent him off.

"It is n't right to waste money like that," she told him.

"Oh, that was the trouble? But it would n't have cost more than a couple of dollars to have gone back with him."

"Two dollars! That's carfare for three weeks."

"Of course, if you look at it that way. But here we are away uptown, and — hanged if I know how to get out."

He looked around, as bewildered as a lost child. She could not help laughing.

"If you're as helpless as that I don't see how you ever get home at night," she said.

He looked in every direction, but he did not see a car line. He turned to her.

"I won't help you," she said, shaking her head.

"Then we'll have to walk until we come to the Elevated," he determined.

"All right," she nodded. "Only, if you don't go in the right direction you will walk all night before you come to the Elevated."

"I can ask some one, can't I?"

"I certainly would before I walked very far."

"Then I'm going to ask you."

He raised his hat.

"I beg pardon, madame, but would you be so good —"

"Oh, turn to the right," she laughed. "And do put on your hat."

It was a quiet little French restaurant of the better kind to which he took her — a place he had stumbled on one evening, and to which he occasionally went when the club menu did not appeal to him. Jacques had reserved a table in a corner, and had arranged there the violets that Monsieur Pendleton had sent for this purpose. On the whole, it was just as well Miss Winthrop did not know this, or of the tip that was to lead to a certain kind of salad and to an extravagant dish with mushrooms to come later. It is certain that Monsieur Pendleton knew how to arrange a dinner from every other but the economical end.

Don was very much himself to-night, and in an exceedingly good humor. In no time he made her also feel very much herself and put

her into an equally good humor. Her cares, her responsibilities, her fears, vanished as quickly as if the last three or four years had taught her nothing. She had started with set lips, and here she was with smiling ones. In the half-hour that she waited in her room for him, she had rehearsed a half-dozen set speeches; now she did not recall one of them.

Don suggested wine, but she shook her head. She had no need of wine. It was wine enough just to be out of her room at night; wine enough just to get away from the routine of her own meals; wine enough just not to be alone; wine enough just to get away from her own sex for a little.

Don chatted on aimlessly through the anchovies, the soup, and fish, and she enjoyed listening to him. He was the embodiment of youth, and he made even her feel like a care-free girl of sixteen again. This showed in her face, in the relaxed muscles about her mouth, and in her brightened eyes.

Then, during the long wait for the steak and mushrooms, his face became serious, and he leaned across the table.

"By the way," he began, "the house has received a new allotment of bonds; I want to tell you about them."

He had his facts well in hand, and he spoke with conviction and an unconventionality of expression that made her listen. She knew a good salesman when she heard one, whether she was familiar with the particular subject-matter or not. The quality of salesmanship really had nothing to do with the subject-matter. A good salesman can sell anything. It has rather to do with that unknown gift which distinguishes an actor able to pack a house from an actor with every other quality able only to half fill a house. It has nothing to do with general intelligence; it has nothing to do with conscientious preparation; it has nothing to do with anything but itself. It corresponds to what in a woman is called charm, and which may go with a pug nose or freckles or a large mouth. But it cannot be cultivated. It either is or is not.

It was the mushrooms and steak that interrupted him. Jacques was trying to draw his attention to the sizzling hot platter which he

was holding for his inspection — a work of art in brown and green. Ordinarily Monsieur Pendleton took some time to appreciate his efforts. Now he merely nodded: —

"Good."

Jacques was somewhat disappointed.

"Madame sees it?" he ventured.

Madame, who was sitting with her chin in her hands, staring across the table at Monsieur, started.

"Yes," she smiled. "It is beautiful."

But, when Jacques turned away to carve, she continued to stare again at Mr. Pendleton.

"It's in you," she exclaimed. "Oh, what a chance you have!"

"You think I'll do?"

"I think that in two years you'll be outselling any one in the office," she answered.

His face flushed at the praise.

"That's straight?"

"That's straight," she nodded. "And within another year Farnsworth will pay you anything you demand."

"Ten thousand?"

"A gift like yours is worth that to the house — if you don't spoil it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, I mean you must keep it fresh and clean and free, and not mix it up with money," she ran on eagerly. "You must keep right on selling for the fun of the game and not for the gain. The gain will come fast enough. Don't worry about that. But if you make it the end, it may make an end of your gift. And you must n't get foolish with success. And you must n't — oh, there are a hundred ways of spoiling it all."

It was her apparent sure knowledge of these things that constantly surprised him.

"How do you know?" he demanded.

"Because I've seen and heard. All I can do is to stop, look, and listen, is n't it?"

"And warn the speeders?" he laughed.

"If I could do that much it would be something," she answered wistfully.

"Will you warn me?"

"I'm warning you now."

She met his eyes with a puzzled frown.

"I've seen a lot of men start right, but they don't stay right. Why don't they?"

"But a lot of them do," he answered.

"And they are the kind that just stay. I hate that kind. I hate people who just stay. That's why I hate myself sometimes."

He looked up at her quickly. It was the first indication he had that she was not continually in an unbroken state of calm content. He caught her brown eyes grown suddenly full, as if they themselves had been startled by the unexpected exclamation.

"What's that you said?" he demanded.

She tried to laugh, but she was still too disconcerted to make it a successful effort. She was not often goaded into as intimate a confession as this.

"It is n't worth repeating," she answered uneasily.

"You said you hated yourself sometimes."

"The steak is very, very good," she answered, smiling.

"Then you are n't hating yourself now?"

"No, no," she replied quickly. "It's only when I get serious and — please don't let's be serious."

The rest of the dinner was very satisfactory,

for he left her nothing to do but sit back and enjoy herself. And he made her laugh, sharing with him his laughter. It was half-past ten when they arose and went out upon the street. There she kept right on forgetting. It was not until she stood in her room, half-undressed, that she remembered she had not told Pendleton that to-night was positively to bring to an end this impossible friendship.

CHAPTER XII

A SOCIAL WIDOW

With the approach of the holiday season, when pretty nearly every one comes back to town, Frances found her engagements multiplying so rapidly that it required a good deal of tact and not a little arithmetic to keep them from conflicting. In this emergency, when she really needed Don, not only was he of no practical help, but he further embarrassed her by announcing a blanket refusal of all afternoon engagements. This placed her in the embarrassing position of being obliged to go alone and then apologize for him.

"Poor Don is in business now," was her stock explanation.

She was irritated with Don for having placed her in this position. In return for having surrendered to him certain privileges, she had expected him to fulfill certain obligations. If she had promised to allow him to serve exclusively as her social partner, then he should

have been at all times available. He had no right to leave her a social widow — even when he could not help it. As far as the afternoons were concerned, the poor boy could not help it — she knew that; but, even so, why should her winter be broken up by what some one else could not help?

She had given her consent to Don, not to a business man. As Don he had been delightful. No girl could ask to have a more attentive and thoughtful fiancé than he had been. He allowed her to make all his engagements for him, and he never failed her. He was the only man she knew who could sit through a tea without appearing either silly or bored. And he was nice — but not too nice — to all her girl friends, so that most of them were jealous of her. Decidedly, she had had nothing to complain of.

And she had not complained, even when he announced that he was penniless. This did not affect her feeling toward Don himself. It was something of a nuisance, but, after all, a matter of no great consequence. She had no doubt he could make all the money he wanted, just as her father had done.

But of late it had been increasingly difficult to persuade him, on account of business, to fulfill even his evening engagements. He was constantly reminding her of bonds and things that he must study. Well, if it was necessary for him to study bonds and things, he should find some way of doing it that would not interfere with her plans.

The climax came when he asked to be excused from the Moore cotillion because he had three other dances for that week.

"You see," he explained, "Farnsworth is going to let me go out and sell as soon as I'm fit, and so I'm putting in a lot of extra time."

"Who is Farnsworth?" she inquired.

"Why, he's the general manager. I've told you about him."

"I remember now. But, Don dear, you are n't going to *sell* things?"

"You bet I am," he answered enthusiastically. "All I'm waiting for is a chance."

"But what do you sell?" she inquired.

"Investment securities."

He seemed rather pleased that she was showing so much interest.

"You see, the house buys a batch of securities wholesale and then sells them at retail — just as a grocer does."

"Don!"

"It's the same thing," he nodded.

"Then I should call it anything but an attractive occupation."

"That's because you don't understand. You see, here's a man with some extra money to invest. Now, when you go to him, maybe he has something else in mind to do with that money. What you have to do —"

"Please don't go into details, Don," she interrupted. "You know I would n't understand."

"If you'd just let me explain once," he urged.

"It would only irritate me," she warned. "I'm sure it would only furnish you with another reason why you should n't go about as much as you do."

"It would," he agreed. "That's why I want to make it clear. Don't you see that if I keep at this for a few years —"

"Years?" she gasped.

"Well, until I get my ten thousand."

"DON DEAR, YOU 'RE LIVING TOO MUCH DOWNTOWN"

"But I thought you were planning to have that by next fall at the latest."

"I'm going to try," he answered. "I'm going to try hard. But, somehow, it does n't look as easy as it did before I started. I did n't understand what a man has to know before he's worth all that money."

"I'm sure I don't find ten thousand to be very much," she observed.

"Perhaps it is n't much to spend," he admitted, "but it's a whole lot to earn. I know a bunch of men who don't earn it."

"Then they must be very stupid."

"No; but somehow dollars look bigger downtown than they do uptown. Why, I know a little restaurant down there where a dollar looks as big as ten."

"Don, dear, you're living too much downtown," she exclaimed somewhat petulantly. "You don't realize it, but you are. It's making you different — and I don't want you different. I want you just as you used to be."

She fell back upon a straight appeal — an appeal of eyes and arms and lips.

"I miss you awfully in the afternoons," she

went on, "but I'll admit that can't be helped. I'll give up that much of you. But after dinner I claim you. You're mine after dinner, Don."

She was very tender and beautiful in this mood. When he saw her like this, nothing else seemed to matter. There was no downtown or uptown; there was only she. There was nothing to do but stoop and kiss her eager lips. Which is exactly what he did.

For a moment she allowed it, and then with an excited laugh freed herself.

"Please to give me one of your cards, Don," she said.

He handed her a card, and she wrote upon it this:—

"*December sixteenth, Moore cotillion.*"

CHAPTER XIII

DEAR SIR —

Don never had an opportunity to test his knowledge of the bonds about which he had laboriously acquired so much information, because within the next week all these offerings had been sold and their places taken by new securities. These contained an entirely different set of figures. It seemed to him that all his previous work was wasted. He must begin over again; and, as far as he could see, he must keep on beginning over again indefinitely. He felt that Farnsworth had deprived him of an opportunity, and this had the effect of considerably dampening his enthusiasm.

Then, too, during December and most of January Frances kept him very busy. He had never seen her so gay or so beautiful. She was like a fairy sprite ever dancing to dizzy music. He followed her in a sort of daze from dinner to dance, until the strains of music whirled through his head all day long.

The more he saw of her, the more he desired of her. In Christmas week, when every evening was filled and he was with her from eight in the evening until two and three and four the next morning, he would glance at his watch every ten minutes during the following day. The hours from nine to five were interminable. He wandered restlessly about the office, picking up paper and circular, only to drop them after an uneasy minute or two. The entire office staff faded into the background. Even Miss Winthrop receded until she became scarcely more than a figure behind a typewriter. When he was sent out by Farnsworth, he made as long an errand of it as he could. He was gone an hour, or an hour and a half, on commissions that should not have taken half the time.

It was the week of the Moore cotillion that Miss Winthrop observed the change in him. She took it to be a natural enough reaction and had half-expected it. There were very few men, her observation had told her, who could sustain themselves at their best for any length of time. This was an irritating fact, but being

a fact had to be accepted. As a man he was entitled to an off day or two — possibly to an off week.

But when the second and third and fourth week passed without any notable improvement in him, Miss Winthrop became worried.

"You ought to put him wise," she ventured to suggest to Powers.

"I?" Powers had inquired.

"Well, he seems like a pretty decent sort," she answered indifferently.

"So he is," admitted Powers, with an indifference that was decidedly more genuine than her own. It was quite clear that Powers's interest went no further. He had a wife and two children and his own ambitions.

For a long time she saw no more of him than she saw of Blake. He nodded a good-morning when he came in, and then seemed to lose himself until noon. Where he lunched she did not know. For a while she had rather looked for him, and then, to cure herself of that, had changed her own luncheon place. At night he generally hurried out early — a bad practice in itself: at least once, Farnsworth

had wanted him for something after he was gone; he had made no comment, but it was the sort of thing Farnsworth remembered. When, on the very next day, Mr. Pendleton started home still earlier, it had required a good deal of self-control on her part not to stop him. But she did not stop him. For one thing, Blake was at his desk at the time.

It was a week later that Miss Winthrop was called into the private office of Mr. Seagraves one afternoon. His own stenographer had been taken ill, and he wished her to finish the day. She took half a dozen letters, and then waited while Farnsworth came in for a confidential consultation upon some business matters. It was as the latter was leaving that Mr. Seagraves called him back.

"How is Pendleton getting along?" he inquired.

Miss Winthrop felt her heart stop for a beat or two. She bent over her notebook to conceal the color that was burning her cheeks. For an impersonal observer she realized they showed too much.

"I think he has ability," Farnsworth an-

swered slowly. "He began well, but he has let down a little lately."

"That's too bad," answered Mr. Seagraves. "I thought he would make a good man for us."

"I can tell better in another month," Mr. Farnsworth answered.

"We need another selling man," declared Mr. Seagraves.

"We do," nodded Farnsworth. "I have my eye on several we can get if Pendleton does n't develop."

"That's good. Ready, Miss Winthrop."

The thing Miss Winthrop had to decide that night was whether she should allow Mr. Pendleton to stumble on to his doom or take it upon herself to warn him. She was forced to carry that problem home with her, and eat supper with it, and give up her evening to it. Whenever she thought of it from that point of view, she grew rebellious and lost her temper. There was not a single sound argument why her time and her thought should be thus monopolized by Mr. Pendleton.

She had already done what she could for him, and it had not amounted to a row of pins. She

had told him to go to bed at night, so that he could get up in the morning fresh, and he had not done it. She had advised him to hustle whenever he was on an errand for Farnsworth, and of late he had loafed. She had told him to keep up to the minute on the current investments the house was offering, and to-day he probably could not have told even the names of half of them. No one could argue that it was her duty to keep after him every minute — as if he belonged to her.

And then, in spite of herself, her thoughts went back to the private office of Mr. Seagraves. She recalled the expression on the faces of the two men — an expression denoting only the most fleeting interest in the problem of Mr. Pendleton. If he braced up, well and good; if he did not, then it was only a question of selecting some one else. It was Pendleton's affair, not theirs.

That was what every one thought except Pendleton himself — who did not think at all, because he did not know. And if no one told him, then he would never know. Some day Mr. Farnsworth would call him into the office

and inform him his services were no longer needed. He would not tell him why, even if Don inquired. So, with everything almost within his grasp, Pendleton would go. Of course, he might land another place; but it was no easy thing to find the second opportunity, having failed in the first.

Yet this was all so unnecessary. Mr. Pendleton had in him everything Farnsworth wanted. If the latter could have heard him talk as she had heard him talk, he would have known this. Farnsworth ought to send him out of the office — let him get among men where he could talk. And that would come only if Mr. Pendleton could hold on here long enough. Then he *must* hold on. He must cut out his late hours and return to his old schedule. She must get hold of him and tell him. But how?

The solution came the next morning. She decided that if she had any spare time during the day she would write him what she had to say. When she saw him drift in from lunch at twenty minutes past one, she took the time without further ado. She snatched a sheet of

office paper, rolled it into the machine, snapped the carriage into position, and began.

MR. DONALD PENDLETON,
Care Carter, Rand & Seagraves,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sir: —

Of course it is none of my business whether you get fired or not; but, even if it is n't, I like to see a man have fair warning. Farnsworth does n't think that way. He gives a man all the rope he wants and lets him hang himself. That is just what he's doing with you. I had a tip straight from the inside the other day that if you keep on as you have for the last six weeks you will last here just about another month. That is n't a guess, either; it's right from headquarters.

For all I know, this is what you want; but if it is, I'd rather resign on my own account than be asked to resign. It looks better, and helps you with the next job. Most men downtown have a prejudice against a man who has been fired.

You need n't ask me where I got my information, because I won't tell you. I've no business to tell you this much. What you want to remember is that Farnsworth knows every time you get in from lunch twenty minutes late, as you did to-day; and he knows when you get in late in the morning, as you have eleven times now; and he knows when you take an hour and a half for a half-hour errand, as you have seven times; and he

knows when you're in here half-dead, as you've been all the time; and he knows what you don't know about what you ought to know. And no one has to tell him, either. He gets it by instinct.

So you need n't say no one warned you, and please don't expect me to tell you anything more, because I don't know anything more. I am,

Respectfully yours,

SARAH K. WINTHROP.

She addressed this to the Harvard Club, and posted it that night on her way home. It freed her of a certain responsibility, and so helped her to enjoy a very good dinner.

CHAPTER XIV

IN REPLY

Don did not receive Miss Winthrop's letter until the following evening. He had dropped into the club to join Wadsworth in a bracer, — a habit he had drifted into this last month, — and opened the envelope with indifferent interest, expecting a tailor's announcement. He caught his breath at the first line, and then read the letter through some five times. Wadsworth, who was waiting politely, grew impatient.

"If you're trying to learn that by heart —" he began.

Don thrust the letter into his pocket.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized. "It — it was rather important."

They sat down in the lounge.

"What's yours?" inquired Wadsworth, as in response to a bell a page came up.

"A little French vichy," answered Don.

"Oh, have a real drink," Wadsworth urged.

"I think I'd better not to-night," answered Don.

Wadsworth ordered a cock-tail for himself.

"How's the market to-day?" he inquired. He always inquired how the market was of his business friends — as one inquires as to the health of an elderly person.

"I don't know," answered Don.

"You don't mean to say you've cut out business?" exclaimed Wadsworth.

"I guess I have," Don answered vaguely.

"Think of retiring?"

"To tell the truth, I had n't thought of it until very lately; but now —"

Don restrained a desire to read his letter through once more.

"Take my advice and do it," nodded Wadsworth. "Nothing in it but a beastly grind. It's pulling on you."

As a matter of fact, Don had lost some five pounds in the last month, and it showed in his face. But it was not business which had done that, and he knew it. Also Miss Winthrop knew it.

It was certainly white of her to take the trouble to write to him like this. He wondered why she did. She had not been very much in

his thoughts of late, and he took it for granted that to the same degree he had been absent from hers. And here she had been keeping count of every time he came in late. Curious that she should have done that!

In the library, he took out the letter and read it through again. Heavens, he could not allow himself to be discharged like an unfaithful office-boy! His father would turn in his grave. It would be almost as bad as being discharged for dishonesty.

Don's lips came together in thin lines. This would never do — never in the world. As Miss Winthrop suggested, he had much better resign. Perhaps he ought to resign, anyway. No matter what he might do in the future, he could not redeem the past; and if Farnsworth felt he had not been playing the game right, he ought to take the matter in his own hands and get off the team. But, in a way, that would be quitting — and the Pendletons had never been quitters. It would be quitting, both inside the office and out. He had to have that salary to live on. Without it, life would become a very serious matter. The more he thought of this, the more

he realized that resigning was out of the question. He really had no alternative but to make good; so he *would* make good.

The resolution, in itself, was enough to brace him. The important thing now was, not to make Carter, Rand & Seagraves understand this, not to make Farnsworth understand this: it was to make Miss Winthrop understand it. He seized a pen and began to write.

MY DEAR SARAH K. WINTHROP [he began]: —

Farnsworth ought to be sitting at your desk plugging that machine, and you ought to be holding down his chair before the roll-top desk. You'd get more work out of every man in the office in a week than he does in a month. Maybe he knows more about bonds than you do, but he does n't know as much about men. If he did he'd have waded into me just the way you did.

I'm not saying Farnsworth has n't good cause to fire me. He has, and that's just what you've made clear. But, honest and hope to die, I did n't realize it until I read your letter. I knew I'd been getting in late and all that; but, as long as it did n't seem to make any difference to any one, I could n't see the harm in it. I'd probably have kept on doing it if you had n't warned me. And I'd have been fired, and deserved it.

If that had happened I think my father would

have risen from his grave long enough to come back and disown me. He was the sort of man I have a notion you'd have liked. He'd be down to the office before the doors were open, and he'd stay until some one put him out. I guess he was born that way. But I don't believe he ever stayed up after ten o'clock at night in his life. Maybe there was n't as much doing in New York after ten in those days as there is now.

I don't want to make any excuses, but, true as you're living, if I turned in at ten I might just as well set up business in the Fiji Islands. It's about that time the evening really begins. How do you work it yourself? I wish you'd tell me how you get in on time, looking fresh as a daisy. And what sort of an alarm-clock do you use? I bought one the other day as big as a snare-drum, and the thing never made a dent. Then I tried having Nora call me, but I only woke up long enough to tell her to get out and went to sleep again. If your system is n't patented I wish you'd tell me what it is. In the mean while, I'm going to sit up all night if I can't get up any other way.

Because I'm going to make the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves on time, beginning to-morrow morning. You watch me. And I'll make up for the time I've overdrawn on lunches by getting back in twenty minutes after this. As for errands — you take the time when Farnsworth sends me out again.

You're dead right in all you said, and if I can't

make good in the next few months I won't wait for Farnsworth to fire me — I'll fire myself. But that is n't going to happen. The livest man in that office is going to be

Yours truly,

DONALD PENDLETON, JR.

Don addressed the letter to the office, mailed it, and went home to dress. But before going upstairs he called to Nora.

"Nora," he said, "you know that I'm in business now?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you would n't like to see me fired, would you?"

"Oh, Lord, sir!" gasped Nora.

"Then you get me up to-morrow morning at seven o'clock, because if I'm late again that is just what is going to happen. And you know what Dad would say to that."

The next morning Don stepped briskly into the office five minutes ahead of Miss Winthrop.

CHAPTER XV

COST

It was quite evident that Farnsworth had something in mind; for, beginning that week, he assigned Don to a variety of new tasks — to checking and figuring and copying, sometimes at the ticker, sometimes in the cashier's cage of the bond department, sometimes on the curb. For the most part, it was dull, uninspiring drudgery of a clerical nature, and it got on Don's nerves. Within a month he had reached the conclusion that this was nothing short of a conspiracy on Farnsworth's part to tempt him to resign. It had the effect of making him hold on all the more tenaciously. He did his work conscientiously, and — with his lips a little more tightly set than was his custom — kept his own counsel.

He had no alternative. His new work gave him little opportunity to talk with Miss Winthrop, and she was the one person in the world in whom he felt he could confide safely and at

length. She herself was very busy. Mr. Seagraves, having accidentally discovered her ability, was now employing her more and more in his private office.

It was about this time that a lot of petty outside matters came up, further to vex him. Up to this point Don's wardrobe had held out fairly well; but it was a fact that he needed a new business suit, and a number of tailors were thoughtfully reminding him that, with March approaching, it was high time he began to consider seriously his spring and summer outfit. Until now such details had given him scarcely more concern than the question of food in his daily life. Some three or four times a year, at any convenient opportunity, he strolled into his tailor's and examined samples at his leisure. Always recognizing at sight just what he wanted, no great mental strain was involved. He had merely to wave his cigarette toward any pleasing cloth, mention the number of buttons desired on coat and waistcoat, and the matter was practically done.

But when Graustein & Company announced to him their new spring importations, and he

dropped in there one morning on his way downtown, he recognized the present necessity of considering the item of cost. It was distinctly a disturbing and embarrassing necessity, which Mr. Graustein did nothing to soften. He looked his surprise when Don, in as casual a fashion as possible, inquired: —

"What will you charge for making up this?"

"But you have long had an account with us!" he exclaimed. "Here is something here, Mr. Pendleton, — an exclusive weave."

"No," answered Don firmly; "I dont want that. But this other — you said you'd make that for how much?"

Graustein appeared injured. He waved his hand carelessly.

"Eighty dollars," he replied. "You really need two more, and I'll make the three for two hundred."

"Thanks. I will tell you when to go ahead."

"We like to have plenty of time on your work, Mr. Pendleton," said Graustein.

Two hundred dollars! Once upon the street again, Don caught his breath. His bill at Graustein's had often amounted to three times

that, but it had not then come out of a salary of twenty-five dollars a week. Without extra expenses he seldom had more than a dollar left on Saturday. By the strictest economy, he figured, it might be possible to save five. To pay a bill of two hundred dollars would at that rate require forty working weeks. By then the clothes would be worn out.

It was facts like these that brought home to Don how little he was earning, and that made that ten-thousand-dollar salary appear like an actual necessity. It was facts like these that helped him to hold on.

But it was also facts like these that called his attention to this matter of cost in other directions. Within the next two months, one item after another of his daily life became reduced to figures, until he lived in a world fairly bristling with price-tags. Collars were so much apiece, cravats so much apiece, waistcoats and shoes and hats so much. As he passed store windows the price-tags were the first thing he saw. It seemed that everything was labeled, even such articles of common household use as bed-linen, chairs and tables, carpets and drap-

eries. When they were not, he entered and asked the prices. It became a passion with him to learn the cost of things.

It was toward the middle of May that Frances first mentioned a possible trip abroad that summer.

"Dolly Seagraves is going, and wishes me to go with her," she announced.

"It will take a lot of money," he said.

"What do you mean, Don?"

One idle evening he had figured the cost of the wedding trip they had proposed. He estimated it at three years' salary.

"Well, the tickets and hotel bills —" he began.

"But, Don, dear," she protested mildly, "I don't expect you to pay my expenses."

"I wish to Heavens I could, and go with you!"

"We had planned on June, had n't we?" she smiled.

"On June," he nodded.

She patted his arm.

"Dear old Don! Well, I think a fall wedding would be nicer, anyway. And Dolly has an

English cousin or something who may have us introduced at court. What do you think of that?"

"I'd rather have you right here. I thought after the season here I might be able to see more of you."

"Nonsense! You don't think we'd stay in town all summer? Don, dear, I think you're getting a little selfish."

"Well, you'd be in town part of the summer."

She shook her head.

"We shall sail early, in order to have some gowns made. But if you could meet us there for a few weeks — you do have a vacation, don't you?"

"Two weeks, I think."

"Oh, dear, then you can't."

"Holy smoke, do you know what a first-class passage costs?"

"I don't want to know. Then you could n't go, anyway, could you?"

"Hardly."

"Shall you miss me?"

"Yes."

"That will be nice, and I shall send you a card every day."

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "If your father would only go broke before then. If only he would!"

Stuyvesant did not go broke, and Frances sailed on the first of June. Don went to the boat to see her off, and the band on the deck played tunes that brought lumps to his throat. Then the hoarse whistle boomed huskily, and from the Hoboken sheds he watched her until she faded into nothing but a speck of waving white handkerchief. In twenty minutes he was back again in the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves — back again to sheets of little figures with dollar signs before them. These he read off to Speyer, who in turn pressed the proper keys on the adding-machine — an endless, tedious, irritating task. The figures ran to hundreds, to thousands, to tens of thousands.

Nothing could have been more uninteresting, nothing more meaningless. He could not even visualize the sums as money. It was like adding so many columns of the letter "s." And yet, it was the accident of an unfair distribution of

these same dollar signs that accounted for the fact that Frances was now sailing out of New York harbor, while he remained here before this desk.

They represented the week's purchase of bonds, and if the name "Pendleton, Jr.," had appeared at the head of any of the accounts he might have been by her side.

Something seemed wrong about that. Had she been a steam yacht he could have understood it. Much as he might have desired a steam yacht, he would have accepted cheerfully the fact that he did not have the wherewithal to purchase it. He would have felt no sense of injustice. But it scarcely seemed decent to consider Frances from this point of view, though a certain parallel could be drawn: her clean-cut lines, her nicety of finish, a certain air of silver and mahogany about her, affording a basis of comparison; but this was from the purely artistic side. One could n't very well go further and estimate the relative initial cost and amount for upkeep without doing the girl an injustice. After all, there was a distinction between a gasolene engine and a heart, no

matter how close an analogy physicians might draw.

And yet, the only reason he was not now with her was solely a detail of bookkeeping. It was a matter of such fundamental inconsequence as the amount of his salary. He was separated from her by a single cipher.

But that cipher had nothing whatever to do with his regard for her. It had played no part in his first meeting with her, or in the subsequent meetings, when frank admiration had developed into an ardent attachment. It had nothing to do with the girl herself, as he had seen her for the moment he succeeded in isolating her in a corner of the upper deck before she sailed. It had nothing to do with certain moments at the piano when she sang for him. It had nothing to do with her eyes, as he had seen them that night she had consented to marry him. To be sure, these were only detached moments which were not granted him often; but he had a conviction that they stood for something deeper in her than the every-day moments.

CHAPTER XVI

A MEMORANDUM

DURING that next week Don found a great deal of time in which to think. He was surprised at how much time he had. It was as if the hours in the day were doubled. Where before he seldom had more than time to hurry home and dress for his evening engagements, he now found that, even when he walked home, he was left with four or five idle hours on his hands.

If a man is awake and has n't anything else to do, he must think. He began by thinking about Frances, and wondering what she was doing, until young Schuyler intruded himself, — Schuyler, as it happened, had taken the same boat, having been sent abroad to convalesce from typhoid, — and after that there was not much satisfaction in wondering what she was doing. He knew how sympathetic Frances was, and how good she would be to Schuyler under these circumstances. Not that he mistrusted her in the least — she was not the kind

to lose her head and forget. But, at the same time, it did not make him feel any the less lonesome to picture them basking in the sun on the deck of a liner while he was adding innumerable little figures beneath an electric light in the rear of the cashier's cage in a downtown office. It did not do him any good whatever.

However, the conclusion of such uneasy wondering was to force him back to a study of the investment securities of Carter, Rand & Seagraves. Right or wrong, the ten thousand was necessary, and he must get it. On the whole, this had a wholesome effect. For the next few weeks he doubled his energies in the office. That this counted was proved by a penciled note which he received at the club one evening:—

MR. DONALD PENDLETON.
DEAR SIR:—
You're making good, and Farnsworth knows it.
Sincerely yours,
SARAH KENDALL WINTHROP.

To hear from her like this was like meeting an old friend upon the street. It seemed to say

that in all these last three weeks, when he thought he was occupying the city of New York all by himself, she, as a matter of fact, had been sharing it with him. She too had been doing her daily work and going home at night, where presumably she ate her dinner and lived through the long evenings right here in the same city. He seldom caught a glimpse of her even in the office now, for Seagraves took all her time. Her desk had been moved into his office. Yet, she had been here all the while. It made him feel decidedly more comfortable.

The next day at lunch-time Don waited outside the office for her, and, unseen by her, trailed her to her new egg-sandwich place. He waited until she had had time to order, and then walked in as if quite by accident. She was seated, as usual, in the farthest corner.

"Why, hello," he greeted her.

She looked up in some confusion. For several days she had watched the entrance of every arrival, half-expecting to see him stride in. But she no longer did that, and had fallen back into the habit of eating her lunch quite oblivious of

all the rest of the world. Now it seemed like picking up the thread of an old story, and she was not quite sure she desired this.

"Hello," he repeated.

"Hello," she answered.

There was an empty seat next to hers.

"Will you hold that for me?" he asked.

"They don't let you reserve seats here," she told him.

"Then I guess I'd better not take a chance," he said, as he sat down in it.

He had not changed any in the last few months.

"Do you expect me to go and get your lunch for you?" she inquired.

"No," he assured her. "I don't expect to get any lunch."

She hesitated.

"I was mighty glad to get your note," he went on. "I was beginning to think I'd got lost in the shuffle."

"You thought Mr. Farnsworth had forgotten you?"

"I sure did. I had n't laid eyes on him for a week."

"Mr. Farnsworth never forgets," she answered.

"How about the others?"

"There is n't any one else worth speaking of in that office."

"How about you?"

"I'm one of those not worth speaking of," she replied.

She met his eyes steadily.

"Seagraves does n't seem to feel that way. He keeps you in there all the time now."

"The way he does his office desk," she nodded. "You'd better get your lunch."

"I'll lose my chair."

"Oh, get your sandwich; I'll hold the chair for you," she answered impatiently.

He rose immediately, and soon came back with his plate and coffee-cup.

"Do you know I have n't had one of these things or a chocolate éclair since the last time I was in one of these places with you?"

"What *have* you been eating?"

"Doughnuts and coffee, mostly."

"That is n't nearly so good for you," she declared.

He adjusted himself comfortably.

"This is like getting back home," he said.

"Home?"

She spoke the word with a frightened, cynical laugh.

"Well, it's more like home than eating alone at the other places," he said.

"They are all alike," she returned — "just places in which to eat."

She said it with some point, but he did not see the point. He took a bite of his egg sandwich.

"Honest, this tastes pretty good," he assured her.

He was eating with a relish and satisfaction that he had not known for a long time. It was clear that the credit for this was due in some way to Sarah Kendall Winthrop, though that was an equally curious phenomenon. Except that he had, or assumed, the privilege of talking to her, she was scarcely as intimate a feature of his life as Nora.

"How do you like your new work?" she inquired.

"It's fierce," he answered. "It's mostly arithmetic."

"It all helps," she said. "All you have to do now is just to keep at it. Keeping posted on the bonds?"

"Yes. But as fast as I learn a new one, it's sold."

"That's all right," she answered. "The more you learn, the better. Some day Mr. Farnsworth will call you in and turn you loose on your friends."

"You think so?"

"I know it, if you keep going. But you can't let up — not for one day."

"If I can only last through the summer," he reflected aloud. "Have you ever spent a summer in town?"

"Where else would I spend a summer?" she inquired.

"I like the mountains myself. Ever been to Fabyan House?"

She looked to see if he was joking. He was not. He had spent the last three summers very pleasantly in the White Mountains.

"No," she answered. "A ten-cent trolley trip is my limit."

"Where?"

"Anywhere I can find trees or water. You can get quite a trip right in Central Park, and it's good fun to watch the kiddies getting an airing."

There was a note in her voice that made him turn his head toward her. The color sprang to her cheeks.

"It's time I was getting back," she announced as she rose. "This is Mr. Seagraves's busy day."

"But look here; I have n't finished my éclair!"

"Then you'd better devote the next five minutes to that," she advised.

She disappeared through the door, and in another second was blended with a thousand others.

Don drew out his memorandum book and made the following entry:—

"Visit Central Park some day and watch the kiddies."

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE WAY HOME

FRANCES wrote him enthusiastically from London. In her big, sprawling handwriting the letter covered eight pages. Toward the end she added:—

I miss you quite a lot, Don, dear, especially on foggy days. Please don't work too hard, and remember that I am, as always,

Your FRANCES.

Well, that was something to know — that she was always his, even in London. London was a long way from New York, and of course he could not expect her to go abroad and then spend all her time writing to him. He went up to the club after reading this, and wrote her a letter twenty pages long. It was a very sentimental letter, but it did him good. The next day he returned to the office decidedly refreshed. In fact, he put in one of the best weeks there since he had taken his posi-

tion. When Saturday came he was sorry that it was a half-holiday: he would have liked to work even through Sunday.

He left the office that day at a little before twelve, and stood on the corner waiting for Miss Winthrop. They had lunched together every day during the week; but he had not mentioned meeting her to-day, because he had come to the conclusion that the only successful way to do that was to capture her. So she came out quite jauntily and confidently, and almost ran into him as he raised his hat.

She glanced about uneasily.

"Please — we must n't stand here."

"Then I'll walk a little way with you."

So he accompanied her to the Elevated station, and then up the steps, and as near as she could judge purposed entering the train with her. He revealed no urgent business. He merely talked at random, as he had at lunch.

She allowed two trains to pass, and then said: —

"I must go home now."

"It seems to me you are always on the point

of going home," he complained. "What do you do after you get there?"

"I have a great many things to do," she informed him.

"You have dinner?"

"Yes."

"Sometimes I have dinner too," he nodded. "Then what do you do?"

"I have a great many things to do," she repeated.

"I don't have anything to do after dinner," he said. "I just wander around until it's time to go to bed."

"That's a waste of time."

"I know it. It's just killing time until the next day."

She appeared interested.

"You have many friends?"

"They are all in London and Paris," he answered.

"You have relatives."

"No," he answered. "You see, I live all alone. Dad left me a house, but — well, he did n't leave any one in it except the servants."

"You live in a house all by yourself?"

He nodded.

Mr. Pendleton lived in a house! That was a wonderful thing to her. She had almost forgotten that any one lived in whole houses any more. She was eager to hear more. So, when the next train came along she stepped into it, and he followed, although she had not intended to allow this.

"I wish you would tell me about your house," she said wistfully.

So, on the way uptown, he tried to describe it to her. He told her where it was, and that quite took away her breath; and how his father had bought it; and how many rooms there were; and how it was furnished; and, finally, how he came to be living in it himself on a salary of twenty-five dollars a week. As she listened her eyes grew round and full.

"My, but you're lucky!" she exclaimed. "I should think you'd want to spend there every minute you could get."

"Why?" he asked in surprise.

"Just because it's your house," she answered. "Just because it's all your own."

"I don't see it," he answered.

"And what do *you* want of ten thousand a year?" she demanded. "You can live like a king on what you're drawing now."

"You don't mean that?" he asked.

"I don't mean you ought to give up trying for the big jobs," she said quickly. "You ought to try all the harder for those, because that's all that's left for you to try for. With everything else provided, you ought to make a name for yourself. Why, you're free to work for nothing else."

"On twenty-five dollars a week?"

"And a house that's all your own. With a roof over your head no one can take away, and heat and light — why, it's a fortune and your twenty-five so much extra."

"Well, I have to eat," he observed.

"Yes, you have to eat."

"And wear clothes."

She was doing that and paying her rent out of fifteen.

"I don't see what you do with all your money," she answered.

At this point she stepped out of the train, and he followed her. She went down the stairs to

the street, and he continued to follow. She was on her way to the delicatessen store to buy her provisions for the night and Sunday. Apparently it was his intention to go there with her. At the door of the little shop she stopped.

"I'm going in here," she informed him, as if that concluded the interview.

He merely nodded and opened the door for her. She was beginning to be worried. At this rate there was no knowing but what he might follow her right home.

"I'm going to buy my provisions for tomorrow," she further informed him.

"I suppose I must get something too," he answered. "Can't I buy it here?"

"It's a public place," she admitted.

"Then come on."

So they entered together, and Hans greeted them both with a smile, as if this were the most natural thing in the world. But Miss Winthrop herself was decidedly embarrassed. This seemed a very intimate business to be sharing with a man. On the other hand, she did not propose to have her plans put out by a man. So she ordered half a pound of butter and a jar of

milk and some cheese and some cold roast and potato salad for that night and a lamb chop for Sunday, and one or two other little things, the whole coming to eighty-five cents.

"Now," he asked, when she had concluded, "what do you think *I'd* better order?"

Her cheeks were flushed, and she knew it.

"I'm sure I don't know," she answered.

He saw some eggs.

"I might as well have a dozen eggs to start with," he began.

"Is there only yourself?" she inquired.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then I should think a half-dozen would do."

"A half-dozen," he corrected the order.

Then he thought of chops.

"A pound or two of chops," he ordered.

"If you have eggs for breakfast, you will need chops only for dinner. Two chops will be enough."

Before she was through she had done practically all his ordering for him, — because she could not bear to see waste, — and the total came to about one half what it usually cost him. He thought there must be some mistake, and

insisted that Hans make a second reckoning. The total was the same.

"I shall trade with you altogether after this," he informed the pleased proprietor.

There were several packages, but Hans bound them together into two rather large-sized ones. With one of these in each hand, Don came out upon the street with Miss Winthrop.

"I'm going home now," she announced.

"There you are again!" he exclaimed.

"But I must."

"I suppose you think I ought to go home."

"Certainly."

"Look here — does n't it seem sort of foolish to prepare two lunches in two different places. Does n't it seem rather wasteful?"

Offhand, it did. And yet there was something wrong with that argument somewhere.

"It may be wasteful, but it's necessary," she replied.

"Now, is it?" he asked. "Why can't we go downtown somewhere and lunch together?"

"You must go home with your bundles," she said, grasping at the most obvious fact she could think of at the moment.

"If that's the only difficulty, I can call a messenger," he replied instantly.

"And lose all you've saved by coming 'way up here? I won't listen to it."

"Then I'll go home with them and come back."

"It will be too late for lunch then."

"I can take a taxi and —"

"No wonder your salary is n't enough if you do such things!" she interrupted. "If you had ten thousand a year, you would probably manage to spend it all."

"I have n't a doubt of it," he answered cheerfully. "On the other hand, it would get me out of such predicaments as these."

Apparently he was content to stand here in front of the little shop the rest of the afternoon, debating this and similar points. It was necessary for her to take matters into her own hands.

"The sensible thing for you to do is to go home and have lunch," she decided.

"And then?"

"Oh, I can't plan your whole day for you. But you ought to get out in the sunshine."

"Then I'll meet you in the park at three?"

"I did n't say that."

"Will you come?"

She was upon the point of saying no, when she made the mistake of meeting his eyes. They were honest, direct, eager. It was so easy to promise whatever they asked and so hard to be aways opposing them. She answered impulsively: —

"Yes."

But she paid for her impulse, as she generally did, by being sorry as soon as she was out of sight of him. The first thing she knew, she would be back where she was a month ago, and that would never do — never do at all.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DISCOURSE ON SALARIES

UNTIL Miss Winthrop allowed Pendleton to spend with her that afternoon in the park, the period between the close of business on Saturday and the opening on Monday had furnished her with a natural protective barrier. On one side of this stood the business world of Carter, Rand & Seagraves, to which Pendleton himself belonged; on the other side was her own private, personal world. Now that barrier was down. Without realizing at the time the significance of his request, — a request so honestly and smilingly made that it took her off her guard, — she had allowed him, for a period of a couple of hours, to enter that personal world. By her side he had explored with her the familiar paths in the park which until then had been all her own. He had made himself a part of them. Never again could she follow them without, in a sense, having him with her.

She realized this because when, at five o'clock,

she had told him to leave her at the foot of the Elevated, she had watched him out of sight, and then, instead of going home as she intended, she had turned and gone back to the park. She had a vague notion that she must put her life back upon its normal basis before returning to her room. If only for a few moments, she must go over the old paths alone.

It was impossible. Everywhere she turned, it was to recall some careless phrase or gesture or expression of his — to react to them again exactly as when he had been with her. And this man had nothing whatever to do with the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves. She could not force him back there; he insisted upon remaining on the personal side of the barrier.

It was curious how quickly she accepted the situation after her first startled surprise. After all, if she was going to retain her interest in him in any way, it was as necessary to help him outside the office as within. One opportunity had been offered her that very afternoon in making him understand that it was perfectly possible to enjoy a half-holiday without spending all the money in his pocket.

His attitude toward money puzzled her. In one way he seemed to place too much value upon it, and in another way not enough. He overemphasized the importance of a ten-thousand-dollar salary, making that the one goal of his business efforts, and then calmly proposed squandering dollar bills on confectionery and what not as an incident to as simple an amusement as a walk in the park. He neither knew how little a dollar was worth, nor how much. She herself had learned out of hard experience, and if she could only make him understand — well, that at least furnished her with some sort of excuse for allowing this new relationship to continue.

For all any one knows, there may be some divine reason that prompts women to find excuses in such matters — which, in a way, forces them willy-nilly to the making of such excuses.

And yet, she had to admit that it was stretching the excuse pretty far when, a week later, she meekly allowed him to come with her on her usual Sunday outing into the country. By steady cross-examination he had made her divulge the fact that it was her interesting habit

to prepare a luncheon of bread and butter and cake, and, taking a train, to spend the day by the side of a brook she had discovered.

"Fine," he nodded. "Next Sunday I'll go with you."

That afternoon he started making his preparations.

Obviously, the first thing necessary was a luncheon basket, and on his way uptown he saw one of English wicker that took his fancy. It had compartments with bottles and a whole outfit of knives and forks and plates and little drinking-cups and what not. What it cost is nobody's business. Then he stopped at a very nice grocery store on Fifth Avenue and asked the advice of the clerk about the more substantial contents, and the clerk gave his advice very willingly. He bought some French sardines and English marmalade, and some fruit and confectionery and some strictly fresh eggs and dainty crackers and some jelly and olives and cheese and several other little things.

"Now," suggested the clerk, "a small chicken roasted and served cold would be very nice."

"Right," nodded Don.

"I could order it for you from here."

"Right again," agreed Don.

It was to be sent to the house, so that Nora could have it roasted that afternoon.

He accomplished these things on his way uptown, and felt quite satisfied with himself. This preparing of a picnic basket was, after all, a very simple matter.

When Miss Winthrop came into the station for the nine-thirty, he was waiting for her with the big wicker basket in his hand.

They rode to a little village hardly large enough to have a name, and getting out there took to the open road.

Don enjoyed the tramp of three miles that followed, but, on the whole, he was glad when they reached the border of the brook. The walking and the flowers and the scenery occupied too much of the girl's attention. Not only that, but this English wicker basket became heavy in the course of time. At the end of a mile or so it seemed as if the clerk must have lined the bottom of his basket with stones. Don meant to investigate at the first opportunity.

The stream that she had discovered only

after several seasons of ardent exploration was not, geographically considered, of any especial importance to the world at large. But behind the clump of alders out of which it crept was a bit of pasture greensward about as big as a room. Here one might lunch in as complete seclusion as if in the Canadian woods or in the heart of Africa.

She was as eager to have him pleased as if this were some house of her planning. "It's a better dining-place than any in town, is n't it?" she asked.

"I should say so," he nodded.

With her permission, he lighted a cigarette and, stretching himself out on the grass, enjoyed it as only a man can who has limited his smokes to so many a day. She sat near the brook, and she too was quite content and very comfortable.

"I don't see why you did n't tell me about this place before," he observed.

"I was n't quite sure you'd like it here, for one thing," she answered.

"Why not?"

"It is n't a very gay place, is it?"

"It's considerably gayer than my house on a Sunday," he answered.

"It's your own fault you don't enjoy your house more," she declared.

"How is it?"

"Why, it's a wonderful thing to have a house all of your own. I used to pretend this was a house all of my own."

"Don't you any longer?"

She was wondering how it would be about that, now that she had allowed him to enter. Of course, she might treat him merely as a guest here; but that was difficult, because the only thing she based her sense of ownership on was the fact that no one else knew anything about the place. She shook her head.

"It's hard to pretend anything except when you're alone," she answered.

He sat up.

"Then you ought n't to have let me come here with you."

She smiled.

"How could I help it? You just came."

"I know it," he admitted. "I'm always but-

ting in, and you ought to tell me so every now and then."

"Would that make any difference?"

"I don't know as it would," he admitted. "But it might make me uncomfortable."

"I don't want to make you uncomfortable. I think you manage to make yourself uncomfortable enough, as it is. And that's absurd, because just being a man ought to keep you happy all the time."

"I don't see how you figure that," he answered.

"Being a man is being able to do about anything you wish."

"Don't you believe it," he replied. "Having money is the only thing that makes you able to do what you wish."

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "Are you going back to that ten thousand a year?"

"Pretty soon now it will be September," he reflected irrelevantly.

"And then?"

"I had rather hoped to get it by then."

"Well, you won't, so you'd better forget it. I should n't wonder but what you received a

raise to two thousand if Farnsworth gets you out selling, and that ought to satisfy you."

Don looked up. Somehow, every time she put it that way it did sound enough. Beside the brook it sounded like plenty.

"Look here," he exclaimed. "Would you marry a man who was only drawing a salary of two thousand?"

For a moment the question confused her, but only for a moment.

"If I was willing to take my chance with a man," she said, "his salary of two thousand would be the least of my troubles."

"You mean you think two could live on that?"

"Of course they could," she answered shortly.

"And have enough to buy clothes and all those things?"

"And put money in the bank if they were n't two fools," she replied.

"But look here," he continued, clinging to the subject when it was quite evident she was willing to drop it. "I've heard that hats cost fifty dollars and more apiece, and gowns anywhere from two hundred to five."

"Yes," she nodded; "I've heard that."

"Well, don't they?" he persisted.

"I don't remember ever getting any bill of that size," she answered with a smile.

"What do your bills amount to?" he inquired.

Miss Winthrop hesitated a moment.

"If you want to know," she answered finally, "this hat cost me some three dollars with the trimmings. And if I ever paid more than twenty-five dollars for a suit, I'd want some one to appoint a guardian for me."

There certainly was a wide margin of difference here in the estimates made by two women — a difference not accounted for, as far as Don could see, in the visible results. He would have liked to continue more into details, but Miss Winthrop rose as if to put an end to this subject.

"I'm hungry," she announced.

"Right," he nodded. "There's my basket over there, and I'll let you set the table."

Her idea had been that he was to eat his luncheon and she hers. However, she had no objection to making things ready for him. So

she brought the basket over in front of him and opened it. She gave one look into it.

"Did you buy all this?" she demanded.

"Why, yes," he answered.

She removed the napkin and saw the cold chicken.

"Did n't you know any better, or were you just trying to see how much money you could throw away?" she inquired.

"Don't you like chicken?"

"Yes, I like chicken," she answered.

"There are other things underneath, and hot coffee in the bottles," he announced.

Just to see how far he had gone, she took out the other things. She caught her breath.

"Well, it's your own affair," she commented. "But, if you eat all this, I'm sorry for you."

She spread a napkin before him and placed the chicken on it, surrounding it with the tin of sardines, the boxes of crackers, the jar of marmalade, the cheese, the confectionery, and other things. Then she unrolled her own package of sandwiches, and proceeded to munch one.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "You did n't think I bought this all for myself?"

"I'd rather think that than to think you thought I was silly enough to want you to throw away your money."

He was carving the chicken, and he handed her a portion upon one of the bright aluminum plates. But she shook her head in refusal.

"You are n't going to have any of this?"

"No, thank you."

"I call that rather too bad, because if you don't it will be wasted."

"It was wasted when you bought it."

"But you did n't tell me what to get."

"I told you we'd each bring our own luncheon," she reminded him.

"And so we did; but I don't call it very friendly of you not to share with me."

"I have quite enough of my own."

She seemed determined about the matter, so he put all the things back again in the basket, closed and fastened the lid, and, placing it to one side, lighted a fresh cigarette. She watched him in amazement.

"Are n't you going to eat your lunch?" she demanded.

"I refuse to eat alone."

"I'm the one who is eating alone," she said.

"That seems to be what you want."

"You've no right to do things and then blame me for them," she protested.

"You're doing all the blaming yourself," he returned.

For a moment she continued to eat her sandwich in silence and to watch his set face. She was quite sure he would remain stubborn in the stand he had taken.

"It was silly enough to buy all those expensive things, but it would be even sillier to throw them away," she asserted.

"It would at least be too bad," he confessed. "But I can't help it, can I? I can't *make* you eat, you know."

There he went again, placing the whole blame on her.

"Hand me that basket," she ordered.

He handed her the basket, and she brought out the delicacies.

"Next time I shall prepare both lunches," she declared.

"That will be very nice," he nodded.

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER

LETTER from Miss Frances Stuyvesant to Donald Pendleton, Esq.: —

PARIS, FRANCE, June 20.

DEAR OLD DON: —

I'm having a very good time, Don, dear, and I know you'll be glad to hear that. Dolly has a great many friends in Paris, and so has Dad, and so has Chic. Between them all we are very gay. But it is raining to-day, and somehow I've been worrying about your being in town with nothing to do but work. I do hope you are taking care of yourself and running to the shore or the mountains for the week-ends.

Now I must hurry up and dress; but please remember that I am still, as always,

Your FRANCES.

CHAPTER XX

STARS

At lunch one warm Wednesday, Don suggested to Miss Winthrop that after the close of business they take a car for the beach instead of going to their respective homes.

"We can go down there, have our supper, and then get out of the crowd and smell the ocean awhile," he said.

He had a knack for putting in a most reasonable light anything he wished to do. It was a feature of his selling gift, and she recognized it as such.

"What do you say?" he pressed her.

She blushed at her own hesitancy.

"Oh, I'll go," she answered.

The incident remained uppermost in her thoughts all the rest of the afternoon. If she had known about this excursion the day before, she would have put on a different shirt-waist. She had a new silk waist which was very pretty and which she had meant to wear next Sunday.

He met her at the Elevated station, but it was she who had to direct him to the proper trolley for Coney, or they might have landed anywhere along the Sound.

Stopping only long enough to buy an ice for supper and a bag of peanuts, they sought the beach. He threw himself down full length on the sand, and she sat with her hands clasped over her knees. The salt air swept her cheeks and cooled them, and the waves before her ran up the beach in play and song. This was certainly a decided improvement over such a night in her room.

"See those stars!" he exclaimed, as if this were the first time he had ever seen them.

She lifted her eyes and looked at them.

"I often look at them," she said.

Then she laughed gently to herself.

"Do you know what I do when I'm silly enough to want jewels?" she asked.

"What?"

"I take a look at those stars, and then I don't want jewels any more."

"A man could give away diamonds by the handful if women would take that kind," he

exclaimed. "See that big fellow up there?" He pointed it out, and she nodded.

"I'll give you that one," he offered.

She laughed lightly — confidently.

"But I don't have to come to you or to any one," she reminded him. "I can just give it to myself."

"That is n't quite the same thing, is it?"

No, it was not quite the same thing. She knew it. But she was not telling all she knew.

"It's a wonder to me you've never married," he said.

She caught her breath. She had come to look for unexpected remarks from him, but this was a trifle more unexpected than usual. She tried to laugh as she usually did, but she could not laugh.

"I suppose you've figured out that, with all your free diamonds, you're better off as you are," he suggested.

She did not answer.

"Is that the way of it?" he persisted.

She tried to make her voice natural, but there was a tightening in her throat.

"I have n't done much figuring of any kind along that line," she said.

He was looking out to sea.

"I don't know but what both men and women are better off unmarried," he said.

"They are n't," she answered.

It was some one within her rather than she herself who spoke. He turned to look at her, but her eyes were out at sea.

"You mean that?" he said.

"I mean it," she answered.

"Even if a man has n't much money?"

She turned her eyes again to the sky.

"What has money to do with the stars?" she asked.

"Do you think a man in my position has any right to ask a woman to marry him?"

"What has your position to do with it?" she asked.

"It has a lot if the woman wants five times what I'm earning," he answered.

She gave a little startled cry. The stars swam before her.

"Oh!" she gasped. "You mean — you mean you're thinking of some one like — like that?"

"Yes," he answered.

He had a vague notion this was not the sort of thing one ordinarily discussed with another woman. But Miss Winthrop was different from other women: she had both experience and common sense.

"I asked her to marry me a year ago," he said.

The stars were still swimming before her.

"And — and she said —?"

"She said she thought I ought to wait until I was earning ten thousand."

"And that's the reason you — you wanted the ten thousand?"

"Yes. You did n't think I wanted it for myself, did you?"

"I did n't know," she answered.

It was like a load removed from his shoulders. He breathed freer.

"You're the most sensible woman I ever met, and I thought you could help me."

She hated that word sensible now, though when Mr. Seagraves had used it to her it had seemed like a compliment.

"You see, I had plenty of money when we

were first engaged, and so it did n't make any difference, even if she had plenty too. Then, when Dad tied up my share, why, it made things different. We talked it over and decided that ten thousand was about right; but — well, I did n't think it would take so long to get it."

"Where is—where is she now?" Miss Winthrop demanded.

"She went abroad in June to stay until September."

"And left you here?"

"Of course. I could n't go."

"And left you here?" she repeated.

"That's what you get for being in business," he explained. "We had planned to go together — on our honeymoon."

The air was getting chill. She shivered.

"Are n't you warm enough?" he asked.

He started to remove his jacket to throw over her shoulders, but she objected.

"I'm all right."

"Better put it on."

"No; I don't want it."

They were silent a moment, and then she said, almost complainingly: —

"As long as you could n't go, why did n't she stay here with you?"

The question startled him.

"In town?" he exclaimed.

"Why did n't she stay here and look after you?"

"Why, she could n't do that when she was going abroad."

"Then she had no business to go abroad," she answered fiercely.

"Now, look here," he put in. "We are n't married, you know. We're only engaged."

"But *why* are n't you married?"

"We could n't afford it."

"That is n't true. You could afford it on half what you're earning."

He shook his head. "You don't know."

"She should have married you, and if she wanted more she should have stayed and helped you get more."

"And helped?" he exclaimed.

She was looking up at the stars again. They were getting steadier.

"It's the only way a woman can show — she cares."

Then she rose. She was shivering again.

"I think we'd better go now."

"But we have n't been here a half-hour," he protested.

"We've been here quite a long while," she answered. "Please, I want to go home now."

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE DARK

An hour or so later Miss Winthrop lay in her bed, where, with the door tight locked and the gas out, she could feel just the way she felt like feeling and it was nobody's business. She cried because she wished to cry. She cried because it was the easiest and most satisfactory way she knew of relieving the tenseness in her throat. She burrowed her face in the pillow and cried hard, and then turned over on her pig-tails and sobbed awhile. It did not make any difference, here in the dark, whether the tears made lines down her face or not — whether or not they made her eyes red, and, worst of all, her nose red.

From sobbing, Miss Winthrop dwindled to sniveling, and there she stopped. She was not the kind to snivel very long — even by herself. She did not like the sound of it. So she took her wadded handkerchief and jammed it once into each eye and jabbed once at each cheek, and

then, holding it tight in her clenched fist, made up her mind to stop. For a minute or two an occasional sob broke through spasmodically; but finally even that ceased, and she was able to stare at the ceiling quite steadily. By that time she was able to call herself a little fool, which was a very good beginning for rational thinking.

There was considerable material upon which to base a pretty fair argument along this line. Admitting that Don Pendleton was what she had been crying about, — a purely hypothetical assumption for the sake of a beginning, — she was able to start with the premise that a woman was a fool for crying about any man. Coming down to concrete facts, she found herself supplied with even less comforting excuses. If she had been living of late in a little fool's paradise, why, she had made it for herself. She could not accuse him of having any other part in it than that of merely being there. If she went back a month, or three months, or almost a year, she saw herself either taking the initiative or, what was just as bad, passively submitting. Of course, her motive had been merely to

help him in an impersonal sort of way. She had seen that he needed help, but she had not dreamed the reason for it. She had no warning that he had been deserted by her who should have helped him. She had no way of knowing about this other. Surely that ignorance was not her fault.

Here is where she jabbed her handkerchief again into each eye and lay back on her pigtails long enough to get a fresh grip upon herself. Her skin grew hot, then cold, then hot again. It really had all been more the fault of this other than Mr. Pendleton's. She had no business to go away and leave him for some one else to care for. She had no business to leave him, anyway. She ought to have married him away back when he first went to work to make a fortune for her. Why did n't she take the money it cost to go to Europe and spend it on him? She had let a whole year go wasted, when she had such an opportunity as this! Here was a house waiting for her; here was Don waiting for her; and she had gone to Europe!

To put one's self in another's place — in a place of so delicate a nature as this — is a dan-

gerous business, but Miss Winthrop did not do it deliberately. Lying there in the dark, her imagination swept her on. The thought that remained uppermost in her mind was the chance this other girl had missed. She would never have it again. In the fall Don would receive his raise and be sent out to sell, and after that his career was assured. It remained only for him to hold steady — an easy matter after the first year — and his income was bound to increase by thousand-dollar jumps until he won his ten thousand and more. And with that there was not very much left, as far as she could see, for a woman to do. The big fight would be all over. A woman could no longer claim a partnership; she would simply be bought.

If last fall she had had the chance of that other, she would have had him out selling a month ago. Give her a year or two, and she would have him in that firm or some other. She could do it. She felt the power that minute.

This raised a new question. What was she to do from now on? Until now she had had the excuse of ignorance; but there was still another month before Don's fiancée would be back.

And this month would count a whole lot to him. It was the deciding month. Farnsworth had been watching him closely, and had about made up his mind; but he was still on the alert for any break. He had seen men go so far and then break. So had she. It was common enough. She herself had every confidence in Don, but she was doubtful about how long it was wise to leave even him alone. Men could not stand being alone as well as women. They had not the same experience. It took a special kind of nerve to be alone and remain straight.

Well, supposing he did break, what was that to her, now that she knew about this other? Here was a perfectly fair and just question. The man had made his selection and given over his future into the care of the woman of his choice, and she alone was responsible. There could be no dispute about this. It was a fair question; and yet, as soon as she framed it, she recognized it as unworthy of her. Furthermore, it led to an extremely dangerous deduction — namely, that her interest, after all, was not entirely impersonal; for if it were what difference did one woman or twenty other women

make in her relations with him? To put the matter bluntly, she was acting exactly as if she were in love with him herself!

When Miss Winthrop faced that astounding fact she felt exactly as if her heart stopped beating for a full minute. Then it started again as if trying to make up for the lapse in a couple of breaths. She gasped for breath and, throwing off the bedclothes, jumped up and lighted the gas. Here was something to be met in the light. But, as soon as she caught sight of her flushed cheeks and her staring eyes, she hurriedly turned out the gas again and climbed back into bed. Here she lay like some trapped thing, panting and helpless. Over and over again she whispered, "I'm not! I'm not!" as if some one were bending over her and taunting her with the statement. Then she whispered, "It is n't true! Oh, it is n't true!" She denied it fiercely — vehemently. She threw an arm over her eyes even there in the dark.

It was such an absurd accusation! If she had been one of those silly, helpless creatures with nothing else to do in life but fall in love, it might have had some point; but here she was,

a self-respecting, self-supporting girl who had seen enough of men to know distinctly better than to do anything so foolish. It had been the confidence born of this knowledge that had allowed her from the start to take an impersonal interest in the man. And the proof of this was that she had so conducted herself that he had not fallen in love with her.

Then what in the world was she crying about and making such a fuss about? She asked herself that, and, with her lips firm together, determined that the best answer was to do no more crying and make no more fuss. So she settled back again upon her pig-tails, and stared at the ceiling and stared at the ceiling and stared at the ceiling.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SENSIBLE THING

WHEN Miss Winthrop rose the next morning, she scarcely recognized the woman she saw in the glass as the woman she had glimpsed for a second last night when she had risen and lighted the gas. Her cheeks were somewhat paler than usual, and her eyes were dull and tired. She turned from the glass as soon as possible, and donned a freshly laundered shirt-waist. Then she swallowed a cup of coffee, and walked part way to the office, in the hope that the fresh air might do something toward restoring her color. In this she was successful, but toward noon the color began to fade again.

The problem that disturbed her the entire morning long had to do with luncheon. She recognized that here she must strike the key-note to all her future relations with Mr. Pendleton. If she was to eliminate him entirely and go back to the time when he was non-existent, then she must begin to-day. It was so she preferred

to handle disagreeable tasks. She detested compromises. When she had anything to do, she liked to do it at once and thoroughly. If she had consulted her own wishes and her own interests alone, she would never have seen him again outside the office. But if she did this, what would become of him during this next month?

The trouble was that Don would get lonesome — not necessarily for her, but for that other. He was the sort of man who needed some one around all the time to take an interest in him. This deduction was based, not upon guesswork, but upon experience. For almost a year now she had seen him every day, and had watched him react to just such interest on her part. She was only stating a fact when she said to herself that, had it not been for her, he would have lost his position months before. She was only stating another fact when she said to herself that even now he might get side-tracked into some clerical job. Give him a month to himself now, and he might undo all the effort of the last six months. Worse than that, he might fall into the clutches of Blake and go to pieces in another way.

There was not the slightest use in the world in retorting that this, after all, was the affair of Don and his fiancée rather than hers. She had brought him through so far, and she did not propose to see her work wasted. No one would gain anything by such a course.

The alternative, then, was to continue to meet him and to allow matters to go on as before. It was toward the latter part of the forenoon that she reached this conclusion. All this while she had been taking letters from Mr. Seagraves and transcribing them upon her typewriter without an error. She had done no conscious thinking and had reached no conscious conclusion. All she knew was that in the early forenoon she had been very restless, and that suddenly the restlessness vanished and that she was going on with her typewriting in a sort of grim content. Half-past eleven came, and then twelve. She finished the letter, and went for her hat as usual, putting it on without looking in the glass.

Don met her a little way from the office, and she fell into step at his side.

"I was sort of worried about you last night," he said. "You looked tired."

"I guess I was," she answered.

"Don't you get a vacation before long?"

She could have had her vacation a month ago, but there seemed to be no reason for taking it. She had not been able to think of any place to which she wished to go. Then she had forgotten about it.

"I've decided to take it next month," she answered.

She decided that much on the spot.

"I suppose there's one due me, too," he said. "Blake said something about it a while ago. But I don't know what I'd do with a vacation if I took one."

"I should think you had something very important to do with it," she answered quickly.

"What do you mean?"

"Take it for your wedding trip."

The suggestion made him catch his breath. Look here," he exclaimed. "That means getting married!"

"Surely it does," she nodded.

They had reached the little restaurant, and

she hurried in. Without waiting for his assistance, she secured a cup of coffee and a sandwich for herself. Then she found a chair and sat down. She did not know how she was ever going to swallow anything, but she had to have something to do to occupy her hands.

"You put that up to a man as if it were the easiest thing in the world," he observed, sitting in the next chair.

"Well, it is, is n't it — once you've made up your mind?"

"Looks to me as if it was one thing to make up your mind to get married some day, and another really to get married."

"It's better to do it than to waste your time thinking about it," she declared. "When Farnsworth hands you that raise, believe me, he'll want you to have both feet on the ground."

"Eh?"

"He won't want you to be drifting in with only three hours' sleep, the way you did most of last winter. He has a lot more confidence in married men, anyhow."

Don laughed.

"That phrase makes a man feel ten years married."

She had been trying hard to eat her lunch, but without much success. He noticed this.

"What's the matter with you?" he inquired.

"I don't happen to be hungry, that's all," she answered.

"You did n't catch cold last night?"

"No."

"But look here —"

"Oh, I'm all right," she answered.

He went to the counter and returned with some doughnuts for himself and a piece of cake for her.

"This looked so good I thought you might like it," he said, as he placed it on the arm of her chair. "It's so much easier to talk when eating. I want to hear more about this scheme of yours for marrying me off."

"It is n't exactly my suggestion."

"You proposed it a minute ago."

"All I said was that if you mean to get married, you'd better do it right away and be done with it."

"During my vacation ?"

She brought her lips together.

"Yes."

"Do you know, that rather appeals to me," he answered thoughtfully.

She turned aside her head.

"It's the only sensible thing," she assured him.

"It would give a man a chance to settle down and attend to business."

"And give his wife a chance to help him."

"By Jove, I'm going to propose that to Frances the day she lands!" he exclaimed.

He was finishing his last doughnut. Miss Winthrop rose. Once outside, she could breathe freely. She said:—

"Her — her name is Frances?"

"Frances Stuyvesant," he nodded.

"When do you expect her home?"

"The first of September."

"Then you'd better put in a bid to have your vacation the first two weeks in September," she advised. "Business will begin to pick up right after that, and Farnsworth will need you."

CHAPTER XXIII

LOOKING AHEAD

It was now the first week in August. If she could sustain his interest in the project for three weeks and get him married in the fourth, then she could settle back into the routine of her life. It was the only possible way of straightening out the tangle. Once he was safely married, that was the end. Their relations would cease automatically. The conventions would attend to that. As a married man he, of course, could not lunch with her or spend Saturday afternoons in the park with her, or Sunday in the country with her, or mid-week evenings anywhere with her. He would be exiled from her life as effectively as if he himself should go to Europe. In fact, the separation would be even more effective, because there would not be any possible hope of his coming back. For her it would be almost as if he died.

Back in her room that night, Miss Winthrop saw all these things quite clearly. And she saw

that this was the only way. In no other way could she remain in the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves. If he did not marry in September, — she had applied that afternoon for her own vacation to parallel his, — then she must resign. Unmarried, he would be as irresponsible this coming winter as he was last, and if she remained would be thrown back upon her. She could not allow that — she could not endure it.

She had lost so many things all at once. She did not realize until now how much dreaming she had done in these last few months. Dreams of which at the time she had scarcely been conscious returned to-night to mock her with startling vividness. It was not so much that she wished to be loved as that she wished to love. That was where she had deceived herself. Had Don made love to her, she would have recognized the situation and guarded herself. But this matter of loving him was an attack from a quarter she had not anticipated.

In the next three weeks she left him little chance to think of anything but of his work and of Frances. She talked of nothing else at lunch;

she talked of nothing else on Saturday afternoons and on Sundays and whenever they met on other days. This had its effect. It accustomed him to associate together the two chief objectives in his life until in his thoughts they became synonymous. For the first time since their engagement, he began to think of Frances as an essential feature of his everyday affairs.

He began to think about what changes in the house would be necessary before she came. He talked this over with Miss Winthrop.

"I wish you could come up and look the place over before Frances gets here," he said to her one day.

If the color left her face for a second, it came back the next with plenty to spare. The idea was preposterous, and yet it appealed to her strangely.

"I wish I could," she answered sincerely.

"Well, why can't you?" he asked.

"It's impossible — of course," she said.

"I could arrange a little dinner and ask some one to chaperon," he suggested.

"It's out of the question," she answered firmly. "You can tell me all about it."

"But telling you about it is n't like letting you see it," he said.

"It is almost as good, and — almost as good is something, is n't it?"

There was a suppressed note in her voice that made him look up. He had caught many such notes of late. Sometimes, as now, he half expected to find her eyes moist when he looked up. He never did; he always found her smiling.

"I'd have Nora give everything a thorough cleaning before September," she advised.

"I'll do that," he nodded.

He wrote it down in his notebook, and that night spoke to Nora about it. She appeared decidedly interested.

"It's possible that in the fall you may have some one else besides me to look after," he confided to her in explanation.

"It's to be soon, sir?" she asked eagerly.

"In September, perhaps," he admitted.

"It would please your father, sir," she answered excitedly. "It's lonesome it's been for you, sir."

He did not answer, but he thought about that

a little. No, it had not been exactly lonesome for him—not lately. That was because he was looking ahead. That was it.

"It has n't seemed quite natural for you to be living on here alone, sir," she ventured.

"Dad lived here alone," he reminded her.

"Not at your age, sir," answered Nora.

From that moment there was much ado in the house. Don came home at night to find certain rooms draped in dusting clothes, later to appear as fresh and immaculate as if newly furnished. This gave him a great sense of responsibility. He felt married already. He came downtown in the morning a little more serious, and took hold of his work with greater vigor.

The next few weeks passed rapidly. Frances had finished her trip to Scotland and was on her way back to London. She was to sail in a few days now. He cabled her to let him know when she started, and three days later she answered. He showed her reply to Miss Winthrop.

Sail Monday on the Mauretania, but Dolly wants me to spend next two weeks after arrival in the Adirondacks with her.

Miss Winthrop returned the cable with a none too steady hand.

"She must n't do that," she said firmly.

"Of course she must n't," he agreed. "You see, she does n't know she is to be married right away. Do you think I ought to cable her that?"

"I don't think I would," Miss Winthrop replied. "But I would let her know I did n't approve of her arrangement."

"Supposing I just say, 'Have other plans for you'?"

"That would do," she nodded.

So he sent her this message, and that evening at dinner Miss Winthrop spoke to him of another matter.

"I don't think you have shown much attention to her parents this summer. Ought n't you to see them and let them know what you intend?"

"Tell Stuyvesant?" he exclaimed.

"Why should he object?" she asked.

"I don't know as he will. Then again he might. You see, I've never told him just how Dad tied things up."

"I GUESS WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT FROM MEN"

"What difference does that make?" she demanded. "With the house and what you're earning, you have enough."

"It is n't as much as he expects a man to give his daughter, though, — not by a long shot."

"It's enough," she insisted. "Why, even without the house it would be enough."

"Yes," he answered, with a smile. "When you say it — it's enough. I wish Stuyvesant knew you."

The blood came into her cheeks. She wished he would n't say things like that.

"It seems to me you ought to see him and tell him," she said thoughtfully.

He shook his head.

"What's the use of seeing him until I've seen Frances?"

"It's all settled about her."

"That she'll marry me in September?"

"Of course," she answered excitedly. "Why, she's been waiting a whole year. Do you think she'll want to wait any longer? As soon as she knows how well you've done, why — why, that's the end of it. Of course that's the end of it."

"I wish I were as confident as you!"

"You must be," she answered firmly. "You must n't feel any other way. The house is all ready, and you are all ready, and — that's all there is to it."

"And Frances is all ready?"

"When she promised to marry you she was ready," she declared. "You don't understand. I guess women are different from men. They — they don't make promises like that until they are quite sure, and when they are quite sure they are quite ready. This last year should have been hers. You made a mistake, but there's no sense in keeping on with the mistake. Oh, I 'm quite sure of that."

She was wearing a light scarf, — this was at Jacques', — and she drew it over her shoulders. Somehow, the unconscious act reminded him of a similar act on the beach at Coney. . . .

CHAPTER XXIV

VACATIONS

DURING this next week — the week Frances was on the ocean and sailing toward him —he gained in confidence day by day. Miss Winthrop was so absolutely sure of her point of view that it was difficult in her presence to have any doubts.

Frances was due to arrive on Monday, and for Sunday he had arranged at Jacques' a very special little dinner for Miss Winthrop. Miss Winthrop herself did not know how special it was, because all dinners there with him were special. There were roses upon the table. Their odor would have turned her head had it not been for the realization that her trunk was all packed and that to-morrow morning she would be upon the train. She had written to an aunt in Maine that she was coming — to this particular aunt because, of the three or four she knew at all, this aunt was the farthest from New York.

As for him, he had forgotten entirely that Monday marked the beginning of her vacation. That was partly her fault, because for the last week she had neglected to speak of it.

Ordinarily she did not permit him to come all the way back to the house with her; but this night he had so much to talk about that she did not protest. Yes, and she was too weak to protest, anyway. All the things he talked about — his fears, his hopes, speculations, and doubts — she had heard over and over again. But it was the sound of his voice to which she clung. To-morrow and after to-morrow everything would be changed, and she would never hear him talk like this again. He was excited to-night, and buoyant and quick with life. He laughed a great deal, and several times he spoke very tenderly to her.

They had reached her door, and something in her eyes — for the life of him he could not tell what — caused him to look up at the stars. They were all there in their places.

"Look at 'em," he said. "They seem nearer to-night than I've ever seen them."

She was a bit jealous of those stars. It had

been when with her that he had first seen them.

"You are n't looking," he complained.

She turned her eyes to the sky. To her they seemed farther away than ever.

"Maybe Frances is looking at those same stars," he said.

She resented the suggestion. She turned her eyes back to the street.

"Where's the star I gave you?" he asked.

"It's gone," she answered.

"Have you lost it?"

"I can't see it."

"Now, look here," he chided her lightly. "I don't call that very nice. You don't have a star given you every night."

"I told you I did n't need to have them given to me, because I could take all I wanted myself. You don't own the stars too."

"I feel to-night as if I did," he laughed. "I'll have to pick out another for you." He searched the heavens for one that suited him. He found one just beyond the Big Dipper, that shone steadily and quietly, like her eyes. He pointed it out to her.

"I'll give you that one, and please don't lose it."

She was not looking.

"Do you see it?" he insisted.

She was forced to look. After all, he could afford to give her one out of so many, and it would be something to remember him by.

"Yes," she answered, with a break in her voice.

"That one is yours," he assured her.

It was as if he added, "All the rest belong to Frances."

She held out her hand to him.

"Thank you for your star," she said. "And — and I wish you the best of luck."

He took her hand, but he was confused by the note of finality in her voice.

"I don't see any need of being so solemn about saying good-night," he returned.

He continued to hold her hand firmly.

"But it's good-bye and — God-speed, too," she reminded him.

"How do you make that out?"

"You're going on a long journey, and I — I'm going on a little journey."

"You? Where are you going?"

He did n't want her to go anywhere. He wanted her to stay right where she was. Come to think of it, he always wanted her to stay right where she was. He always thought of her as within reach.

"My vacation begins to-morrow," she answered.

"And you're going away — out of town?"

She nodded.

"You can't do that," he protested. "Why, I was depending upon you these next few days."

It was difficult for her to tell at the moment whether the strain in her throat was joy or pain. That he needed her — that was joy; that he needed her only for the next few days — that was not joy.

"You must n't depend upon any one these next few days but yourself," she answered earnestly. "And after that — just yourself and her."

"That's well enough if everything comes out all right."

"Make it come out right. That's your priv-

ilege as a man. Oh, that's why it's so good to be a man!"

"You ought to have been a man yourself," he told her.

She caught her breath at that, and insisted upon withdrawing her hand.

"I used to think I'd like to be," she answered.

"And now?"

She shook her head.

He had swung the talk back to her again, when the talk should have been all of him and Frances.

"It's in you to get everything in the world you want," she said. "I'm sure of that. All you have to do is to want it hard enough. And now there are so many things right within your grasp. You won't let go of them?"

"No," he answered.

"Your home, your wife, and your work — it's wonderful to make good in so many things all at once! So —.good-bye."

"You talk as if you were not coming back again!"

"I'm coming back to Carter, Rand & Seagraves — if that's what you mean."

"And you're coming back here — to your home?"

"Yes; I'm coming back here."

"Then we'll just say s'long."

"No. We must say good-bye."

She had not wished to say this in so many words. She had hoped he would take the new situation for granted.

"When I come back you must look on me as — as Mr. Farnsworth does."

"That's nonsense."

"No; it's very, very good sense. It's the only thing possible. Can't you see?"

"No."

"Then Frances will help you see."

"She won't want to make a cad of me; I know that."

"I'm going in now."

She opened the door behind her.

"Wait a moment," he pleaded.

"No, I can't wait any longer. Good-bye."

She was in the dark hall now.

"Good-bye," she repeated.

"S'long," he answered.

Softly, gently, she closed the door upon him. Then she stumbled up the stairs to her room, and in the dark threw herself face down on her bed.

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE PARK

EITHER Frances had grown more beautiful in the last three months, or Don had forgotten how really beautiful she was when she left; for, when she stepped down the gangplank toward him, he was quite sure that never in his life had he seen any one so beautiful as she was then. Her cheeks were tanned, and there was a foreign touch in her costume that made her look more like a lady of Seville than of New York. As she bent toward him for a modest kiss, he felt for a second as if he were in the center of some wild plot of fiction. This was not she to whom he was engaged, — she whom he purposed to marry within the week, — but rather some fanciful figure of romance.

He stepped into her car, — he did not know even if he was asked, — and for a half-hour listened to her spirited narration of incidents of the voyage. It was mostly of people, of this man and that, this woman and that, with the

details of the weather and deck sports. Under ordinary circumstances he might have enjoyed the talk; but, with all he had to tell her, it sounded trivial.

They reached the house. Even then, there was much talk of trunks and other things of no importance to him whatever. Stuyvesant hung around in frank and open admiration of his daughter; and Mrs. Stuyvesant beamed and listened and stayed. Don had a feeling that, in spite of his position in the family, they looked upon him at this moment as an intruder.

It was another half-hour before he found himself alone with her. She came to his side at once — almost as if she too had been awaiting this opportunity.

"Dear old Don," she said. "It's good to see you again. But you look tired."

"And you look beautiful!" he exclaimed.

Now that he was alone with her, he felt again as he had at the steamer — that this woman was not she to whom he was engaged, but some wonderful creature of his imagination. The plans he had made for her became common-

place. One could not talk over with her the matter-of-fact details of marrying and of housekeeping and of salaries. And those things that yesterday had filled him with inspiration, that had appeared to him the most wonderful things in life, that had been associated with the stars, seemed tawdry. She had been to London to see the Queen, and the flavor of that adventure was still about her.

"Don, dear, what's the matter?"

He was so long silent that she was worried. He passed his hand over his forehead.

"I don't know," he answered honestly. "There were a lot of things I wanted to say to you, and now I can't think of them."

"Nice things?"

"Perhaps it's the house," he replied vaguely. "I wish we could get out of here for a little while. After lunch I want you to come to walk with me. Will you?"

"Where, Don?"

He smiled.

"In the park."

"What an odd fancy!" she answered.

"Here I get you all mixed up with your

father and mother and the Queen," he ran on. "I want to talk to you alone."

He sounded more natural to her when he talked like that.

"All right, Don, though there are a hundred things I ought to do this afternoon. And I must decide about going to the mountains with Dolly. What *were* those other plans you cabled me about?"

"Those are what I want to talk over with you," he answered.

"What are they? I'm dying to know."

"I'll tell you in the park. Now I'll go, so that you'll have time to do some of the hundred things you want to do."

He turned.

"Don't you want to — to —"

She held out her arms to him. He kissed her lips. Then she seemed to come back to him as she had been before she sailed. He could have said all he wished to say then. But her mother was calling her.

"I'll be here at two. And, this once — you must cancel every other engagement."

"Yes, Don."

She came to the door with him, and stood there until he turned the corner. He did not know where to go, but unconsciously his steps took him downtown. He stopped at a florist's and ordered a dozen roses to be sent back to the house. He stopped to order a box of her favorite bonbons. Then he kept on downtown toward the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves. But this was the first day of his vacation, and so he had no object in going there. He must find a place to lunch. He came to a dairy lunch, and then he knew exactly what it was he needed. He needed Sally Winthrop to talk over his complication with him.

As he made his way to the counter for his sandwich and coffee, he frowned. He had told her that he would surely need her. Now she was gone. He suddenly recalled that she had not even left her address.

Only two days before he had been discussing with her the final details of the house awaiting Frances, and she had made him feel that everything was perfect.

"She will love it," she had assured him.

It was as if he heard her voice again repeating

that sentence. Once again he reacted to her enthusiasm and saw through her eyes. She had made him feel that money — the kind of money Stuyvesant stood for — was nonsense. A salary of twelve hundred a year was enough for the necessities, and yet small enough to give his wife an opportunity to help.

"When the big success comes," she had said to him, "then Frances can feel that it is partly her success too. A woman does n't become a wife by just marrying a man, does she? It's only when she has a chance to help that she can feel herself really a wife."

As she said it he felt that to be true, although to him it was a brand-new point of view.

And Sally Winthrop had given him, in her own life, a new point of view on woman. He understood that she had never married because she had never happened to fall in love. She had always been too busy. But if ever she did fall in love, what a partner she would make! Partner — that was the word.

"It's in you to get everything in the world you want," she had said last night, when she was leaving him.

So it was. He gulped down the rest of his coffee and glanced at his watch. It was shortly after one. He must stay down here another half-hour — stay around these streets where he had walked with her and where she had made him see straight — until he had just time to meet Frances.

He went out and walked past the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves, and then walked to the Elevated station where she took the train at night for home. The sight of the steps up which they had climbed together made him almost homesick. He wished to Heaven that she had postponed her vacation another day. If only he could see her a few minutes right now, he would be absolutely sure of himself.

It was after two when he reached the house, but Frances was not ready. She was never quite ready.

"I'll wait outside," he told the maid.

The maid raised her brows a trifle, but answered civilly: —

"Very well, sir."

As he walked back and forth the Stuyvesant machine also drew up before the door and

waited. He viewed it with suspicion. He could not say what he had to say in that. She must be afoot, as Sally Winthrop always was.

He was making his turn at the end of the street when she came down the steps and before he could reach her stepped into the machine.

"I have several little things to do after we've had our walk," she explained to Don, as he came up.

She made room for him by her side. Because he did not wish to argue before the chauffeur, he took his allotted place; but he himself gave the order to the driver:—

"Central Park."

Then he turned to her.

"When we get there we must get out and walk."

"Very well, Don," she submitted; "but I think we 'd be much more comfortable right here."

She regarded him anxiously.

"Is anything worrying you, Don?"

"Only you," he answered.

"I?" she exclaimed. "If it's because of Jimmy Schuyler, you need n't worry any more.

He was very nice at first, but later — well, he was too nice. You see, he forgot I was engaged."

"The little cad!" exclaimed Don.

"You must n't blame him too much. He just forgot. And now he is very attentive to Dolly."

"She allows it?"

"I think she rather likes him. She has invited him up to camp. And, Don, dear, she wants you to come too. It would be very nice if we could all go. Can't you manage it?"

"It does n't appeal to me just now," he answered.

The machine had swung into the park. He ordered the chauffeur to stop.

"Come," he said to Frances.

He found the path from the drive where the children played, and he found the bench where he had sat with Sally Winthrop. Then all she had told him came back to him, as it had in the dairy lunch.

"It's about the other plans I want to tell you out here," he began eagerly.

"Yes, Don."

"I've done a lot of work while you were away," he said proudly.

"It seems a pity it was necessary," she answered.

"It's been the best thing that ever happened to me," he corrected her. "It has made me see straight about a lot of things. And it's helped me to make good in the office."

She looked puzzled.

"You mean you've been made a partner or something?"

"Hardly that — yet," he smiled. "But it's pretty sure I'll be put to selling when I come back."

"You're going away?"

"I 'm on my vacation," he explained. "This is the first day of my vacation."

"Oh, then you *can* come with us?"

"I'd rather you came with me."

"With you, Don? But where?"

"Anywhere you wish, as long as we go together and alone. Only we must get back in two weeks."

"Don, dear!"

"I mean it," he went on earnestly. "I want to marry you to-morrow or next day. Your trunks are all packed, and you need n't unpack

them. We'll spend all the time we can spare in the mountains, and then come back — to the house. It's all ready for you, Frances. It's waiting for you."

She stared about in fear lest some one might be overhearing his rambling talk.

"Don," she gasped.

"Nora has cleaned every room," he ran on, "and I've saved a hundred dollars for the trip. And Farnsworth is going to give me a raise before December. He has n't promised it, but I know he'll do it, because I'm going to make good. You and I together will make good."

She did not answer. She could not. She was left quite paralyzed. He was leaning forward expectantly.

"You'll come with me?"

It was a full minute before she could answer. Then she said: —

"It's so impossible, Don."

"Impossible?"

"One does n't — does n't get married that way!"

"What does it matter how one gets married?" he answered.

"What would people say?"

"I don't care what they'd say."

"You must n't get like that, Don, dear," she chided him. "Why, that's being an anarchist or something, is n't it?"

"It's just being yourself, little girl," he explained more gently. "The trouble with us is, we've thought too much about other people and — other things. It's certain that after we're married people are n't going to worry much about us, so why should we let them worry us before that? No, it's all our own affair. As for the salary part of it, we've been wrong about that, too. We don't need so much as we thought we did. Why, do you know you can get a good lunch downtown for fifteen cents? It's a fact. You can get an egg sandwich, a chocolate éclair, and a cup of coffee for that. I know the place. And I've figured that, with the house all furnished us, we can live easy on twenty-five a week until I get more. You don't need your ten thousand a year. It's a fact, Frances."

She did not answer, because she did not quite know what he was talking about. Yet, her

blood was running faster. There was a new light in his eyes — a new quality in his voice that thrilled her. She had never heard a man talk like this before.

"You'll have to trust me to prove all those things," he was running on. "You'll have to trust me, because I've learned a lot this summer. I've learned a lot about you that you don't know yourself yet. So what I want you to do is just to take my hand and follow. Can you do that?"

At that moment it seemed that she could. On the voyage home she had sat much on the deck alone and looked at the stars, and there had been many moments when she felt exactly as she felt now. Thinking of him and looking at the stars, nothing else had seemed to matter but just the two of them.

There had been a child on board who had taken a great fancy to her — a child about the age of one that was now running about the grass under the watchful eyes of a nurse. His name was Peter, and she and Peter used to play tag together. One afternoon when he was very tired he had crept into her arms, and she had carried

him to her steamer-chair and wrapped him in her steamer-rug and held him while he slept. Then she had felt exactly as when she looked at the stars. All the things that ordinarily counted with her did not at that moment count at all. She had kissed the little head lying on her bosom and had thought of Don — her heart pounding as it pounded now.

"Oh, Don," she exclaimed, "it's only people in stories who do that way!"

"It's the way we can do — if you will."

"There's Dad," she reminded him.

"He let you become engaged, did n't he?"

"Yes; but — you don't know him as well as I."

"I'll put it up to him to-day, if you'll let me. Honest, I don't think it's as much his affair as ours, but I'll give him a chance. Shall I?"

She reached for his hand and pressed it.

"I'll give him a chance, but I can't wait. We have n't time to bother with a wedding — do you mind that?"

"No, Don."

"Then, if he does n't object — it's to-morrow or next day?"

"You — you take away my breath," she answered.

"And if he does object?"

"Don't let's think of that — now," she said. "Let's walk a little — in the park. It's wonderful out here, Don."

Yes, it was wonderful out there — how wonderful he knew better than she. She had not had his advantages. She had not had Sally Winthrop to point out the wonders and make a man feel them. Of course, it was not the place itself — not the little paths, the trees, or even the big, bright sky that Frances meant or he meant. It was the sense of individuality one got here: the feeling of something within bigger than anything without. It was this that permitted Sally Winthrop to walk here with her head as high as if she were a princess. It was this that made him, by her side, feel almost like a prince. And now Frances was beginning to sense it. Don felt his heart quicken.

"This is all you need," he whispered. "Just to walk out here a little."

CHAPTER XXVI

ONE STUYVESANT

THAT evening, before Frances left Don alone in the study, she bent over him and kissed him. Then she heard her father's footsteps and ran. Don was remarkably cool. So was Stuyvesant; but there was nothing remarkable about that. When his daughter told him that Don was waiting to see him, his eyes narrowed the least bit and he glanced at his watch. He had a bridge engagement at the club in half an hour. Then he placed both hands on his daughter's shoulders and studied her eyes.

"What's the matter, girlie?" he asked.

"Nothing, Dad," she answered. "Only — I'm very happy."

"Good," he nodded. "And that is what I want you to be every minute of your life."

Entering his study, Stuyvesant sat down in a big chair to the right of the open fire and waved his hand to another opposite him.

"Frances said you wished to talk over something with me," he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Don. He did not sit down. He could think better on his feet. "It's about our marriage."

Stuyvesant did not answer. He never answered until the other man was through. Then he knew where he stood.

"I don't know whether or not you know the sort of will father left," began Don.

Stuyvesant did know, but he gave no indication of the fact. He had been waiting a year for something of this sort.

"Anyhow," Don went on, "he took a notion to tie up most of the estate. Except for the house—well, he left me pretty nearly strapped. Before that, he'd been letting me draw on him for anything I wanted. When I asked you for Frances I expected things would go on as they were.

"When the change came, I had a talk with Frances, and we agreed that the thing to do was for me to go out and earn about the same sum Dad had been handing to me. Ten thousand a year seemed at the time what we needed.

She said that was what her allowance had been."

Again Don paused, in the hope that Stuyvesant might wish to contribute something to the conversation. But Stuyvesant waited for him to continue.

"So I went out to earn it. Barton found a position for me with Carter, Rand & Seagraves, and I started in. It's a fact I expected to get that ten thousand inside of a year."

Don lighted a cigarette. The further he went, the less interest he was taking in this explanation. Stuyvesant's apparent indifference irritated him.

"That was a year ago," Don resumed. "Today I'm drawing the same salary I started with — twelve hundred. I expect a raise soon — perhaps to twenty-five hundred. But the point is this: I figure that it's going to take me some five years to get that ten thousand. I don't want to wait that long before marrying Frances. Another point is this: I don't think any longer that it's necessary. I figure that we can live on what I'm earning now. So I've put it up to her."

Don had hurried his argument a little, but, as far as he was concerned, he was through. The whole situation was distasteful to him. The longer he stayed here, the less it seemed to be any of Stuyvesant's business.

"You mean you've asked my daughter to marry you on that salary?" inquired Stuyvesant.

"I asked her this afternoon," nodded Don. "I suggested that we get married to-morrow or next day. You see, I'm on my vacation, and I have only two weeks."

Stuyvesant flicked the ashes from his cigar. "What was her reply?"

"She wanted me to put the proposition before you. That's why I'm here."

"I see. And just what do you expect of me?"

"I suppose she wants your consent," answered Don. "Anyhow, it seemed only decent to let you know."

Stuyvesant was beginning to chew the end of his cigar — a bit of nervousness he had not been guilty of for twenty years. "At least, it would have been rather indecent not to have informed me," he answered. "But, of course, you don't expect my consent to such an act of idiocy."

It was Don's turn to remain silent.

"I've no objection to you personally," Stuyvesant began. "When you came to me and asked for my daughter's hand, and I found that she wanted to marry you, I gave my consent. I knew your blood, Pendleton, and I'd seen enough of you to believe you clean and straight. At that time also I had every reason to believe that you were to have a sufficient income to support the girl properly. If she had wanted to marry you within the next month, I would n't have said a word at that time. When I learned that conditions had been changed by the terms of your father's will, I waited to see what you would do. And I'll tell you frankly, I like the way you've handled the situation up to now."

"I don't get that last," Don answered quietly.

"Then let me help you," Stuyvesant resumed grimly. "In the first place, get that love-in-a-cottage idea out of your head. It's a pretty enough conceit for those who are forced to make the best of their personal misfortunes, but that is as far as it goes. Don't for a moment think it's a desirable lot."

"In a way, that's just what I *am* thinking," answered Don.

"Then it's because you don't know any better. It's nonsense. A woman wants money and wants the things she can buy with money. She's entitled to those things. If she can't have them, then it's her misfortune. If the man she looks to to supply them can't give them to her, then it's his misfortune. But it's nothing for him to boast about. If he places her in such a situation deliberately, it's something for him to be ashamed of."

"I can see that, sir," answered Don, "when it's carried too far. But you understand that I'm provided with a good home and a salary large enough for the ordinary decent things of life."

"That is n't the point," broke in Stuyvesant. "We'll admit the girl won't have to go hungry, but she'll go without a lot of other things that she's been brought up to have, and, as long as I can supply them, things she's entitled to have. On that salary you won't supply her with many cars, you won't supply her with the kind of clothes she is accustomed to, you won't supply

her with all the money she wants to spend What if she does throw it away? That's her privilege now. I've worked twenty-five years to get enough so that she can do just that. There's not a whim in the world she can't satisfy. And the man who marries her must give her every single thing I'm able to give her — and then something more."

"In money?" asked Don.

"The something more — not in money."

He rose and stood before Don.

"I've been frank with you, Pendleton, and I'll say I think the girl cares for you. But I know Frances better than you, and I know that, even if she made up her mind to do without all these things, it would mean a sacrifice. As far as I know, she's never had to make a sacrifice since she was born. It is n't necessary. Get that point, Pendleton. It is n't necessary, and I'll not allow any man to make it necessary if I can help it."

He paused as if expecting an outburst from Don. The latter remained silent.

"I've trusted you with the girl," Stuyvesant concluded. "Up to now I've no fault to find

with you. You've lost your head for a minute, but you'll get a grip on yourself. Go ahead and make your fortune, and come to me again. In the mean while, I'm willing to trust you further."

"If that means not asking Frances to marry me to-morrow, you can't, sir."

"You — you would n't ask her to go against my wishes in the matter?"

"I would, sir."

"And you expect her to do so?"

"I hope she will."

"Well, she won't," Stuyvesant answered. He was chewing his cigar again.

"You spoke of the something more, sir," said Don. "I think I know what that means, and it's a whole lot more than anything your ten thousand can give. When I found myself stony broke, I was dazed for a while, and thought a good deal as you think. Then this summer I found the something more. I would n't swap back."

"Then stay where you are," snapped Stuyvesant. "Don't try to drag in Frances."

Don prepared to leave.

"It's a pity you are n't stony broke too," he observed.

"Thanks," answered Stuyvesant. "But I'm not, and I don't intend to have my daughter put in that position."

"You have n't forgotten that I have a house and twelve hundred?"

"I have n't forgotten that is all you have."

"You have n't forgotten the something more?"

Stuyvesant looked at his watch.

"I must be excused now, Pendleton," he concluded. "I think, on the whole, it will be better if you don't call here after this."

"As you wish," answered Pendleton. "But I hope you'll come and see us?"

"Damn you, Pendleton!" he exploded.

Then he turned quickly and left the room. So, after all, it was he in the end who lost his temper.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STARS AGAIN

Don went to the nearest telephone and rang up Frances.

"Your father lost his temper," he explained. "He ordered me not to call again; so will you please to meet me on the corner right away?"

"I've just seen him," she answered. "Oh, Don, it was awful!"

"It is the best thing that could have happened," he said. "We have to meet in the park now. It's the only place left."

"Don, dear, he told me not to meet you anywhere again. He — he was quite savage about it."

"He had no right to tell you that," Don answered. "Anyhow, I must see you. We'll talk it over under the stars."

"But, Don —"

"Please to hurry," he said.

She slipped a scarf over her hair and a cape over her shoulders, and walked to the corner,

looking about fearfully. He gripped her arm and led her confidently away from the house and toward the park. The sky was clear, and just beyond the Big Dipper he saw shining steadily the star he had given Sally Winthrop. He smiled. It was as if she reassured him.

"What did you say to him, Don?" she panted.

"I told him I wished to marry you to-morrow," he answered.

"And he —"

"He said I should n't. He said he could give you more with his ten thousand than I could give you with my twelve hundred. I told him I could give you more with my twelve hundred than he could with his ten thousand."

"I 've never seen him so angry," she trembled.

"I 'd never before seen him angry at all," he admitted. "But, after all, that is n't important, is it? The important thing is whether or not he's right. That's what you and I must decide for ourselves."

She did not quite understand. She thought her father had already decided this question. However, she said nothing. In something of a

daze, she allowed herself to be led on toward the park — at night a big, shadowy region with a star-pricked sky overhead. Like one led in a dream she went, her thoughts quite confused, but with the firm grip of his hand upon her arm steadying her. He did not speak again until the paved street and the stone buildings were behind them — until they were among the trees and low bushes and gravel paths. He led her to a bench.

"See those stars?" he asked, pointing.

"Yes, Don."

"I want you to keep looking at them while I'm talking to you," he said.

Just beyond the Big Dipper he saw the star he had given Sally Winthrop. It smiled reassuringly at him.

"What I've learned this summer," he said, "is that, after all, the clear sky and those stars are as much a part of New York as the streets and high buildings below them. And when you live up there a little while you forget about the twelve hundred or the ten thousand. Those details don't count up there. Do you see that?"

"Yes, Don."

"The trouble with your father, and the trouble with you, and the trouble with me, until a little while ago, is that we did n't get out here in the park enough where the stars can be seen. I'm pretty sure, if I'd been sitting here with your father, he'd have felt different."

She was doing as he bade her and keeping her eyes raised. She saw the steady stars and the twinkling stars and the vast purple depths. So, when she felt his arm about her, that did not seem strange.

"It's up there we'll be living most of the time," he was saying.

"Yes, Don."

"And that's all free. The poorer you are, the freer it is. That's true of a lot of things. You've no idea the things you can get here in New York if you have n't too much money. Your father said that if you don't have cash you go without, when as a matter of fact it's when you have cash you go without."

She lowered her eyes to his. What he was saying sounded topsy-turvy.

"It's a fact," he ran on. "Why, you can get hungry if you don't have too much money; and,

honest, I've had better things to eat this summer, because of that, than I ever had in my life. Then, if you don't have too much money, you can work. It sounds strange to say there's any fun in that, but there is. I want to get you into the game, Frances. You're going to like it. Farnsworth is going to let me sell next month. It's like making the 'Varsity. I'm going to have a salary and commission, so you see it will be partly a personal fight. You can help me. Why, the very things we were planning to get done with before we married are the very things that are worth while. We can stand shoulder to shoulder now and play the game together. You can have part of the fun."

She thrilled with the magic of his voice, but his words were quite meaningless.

"You are n't looking at the stars," he reminded her. She looked up again.

"So," he said, "there's no sense in waiting any longer, is there? The sooner we're married, the sooner we can begin. If we're married tomorrow, we'll have almost two weeks in the mountains. And then —"

She appeared frightened.

"Oh, Don, we — we could n't get married like that, anyway."

"Why not?" he demanded.

"It — it is n't possible."

"Certainly it's possible."

She shook her head.

"No, no. I — I could n't. Oh, Don, you'll have to give me time to think."

"There is n't time," he frowned.

"We must take time. I'm — I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid of myself," she answered quickly. "Afraid of Dad. Oh, I'm afraid of every one."

"Of me?" He took her hand.

"When you speak of to-morrow I am," she admitted. "While you were talking, there were moments when — when I could do as you wish. But they did n't last."

"That's because you did n't keep your eyes on the stars," he assured her gently.

"That's what I'm afraid of — that I should-n't be able to keep them there. Don, dear, you don't know how selfish I am and — and how many things I want."

She was seeing herself clearly now and speaking from the depths of her soul.

"Maybe it is n't all my fault. And you're wonderful, Don. It's that which makes me see myself."

He kissed her hand. "Dear you," he whispered, "I know the woman 'way down deep in you, and it's she I want."

She shook her head.

"No," she answered. "It's some woman you've placed there—some woman who might have been there—that you see. But she is n't there, because—because I can't go with you."

Some woman he had put there. He looked at the stars, and the little star by the Big Dipper was shining steadily at him. He passed his hand over his forehead.

"If she were really in me, she'd go with you to-morrow," Frances ran on excitedly. "She'd want to get into the game. She'd want to be hungry with you, and she would n't care about anything else in the world but you. She—she'd want to suffer, Don. She'd be almost glad that you had no money. Her father would n't count, because she'd care so much."

She drew her cape about her shoulders.

"Yes," he answered in a hoarse whisper; "she's like that."

"So, don't you see —"

"Good Lord, I do see!" he exclaimed.

Now he saw.

With his head swimming, with his breath coming short, he saw. But he was as dazed as a man suddenly given sight in the glare of the blazing sun.

Frances was frightened by his silence.

"I — I think we'd better go back now," she said gently.

He escorted her to the house without quite knowing how he found the way. At the door she said: —

"Don't you understand, Don?"

"Yes," he answered; "for the first time."

"And you'll not think too badly of me?"

"It is n't anything you can help," he answered. "It is n't anything I can help, either."

"Don't think too badly of Dad," she pleaded. "He'll cool down soon, and then — you must come and see me again."

She held out her hand, and he took it. Then

swiftly she turned and went into the house. He hurried back to the path — to the path where on Saturday afternoons he had walked with Sally Winthrop.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SEEING

He saw now. Blind fool that he had been, month after month! He sank on a bench and went back in his thoughts to the first time he had ever seen Sally Winthrop. She had reminded him that it was luncheon time, and when he had gone out she had been waiting for him. She must have been waiting for him, or he never would have found her. And she had known he was hungry.

"She'd want to be hungry with you," Frances had said.

How had Sally Winthrop known that he was hungry? She had known, and had shared with him what she had.

Then incident after incident in the office came back to him. It was she who had taught him how to work. It was for her that he had worked.

Frances had used another phrase: "She'd be almost glad you had no money."

There was only one woman in the world he knew who would care for a man like that — if she cared at all. That brought him to his feet again. He glared about as if searching for her in the dark. Why was n't she here now, so that he might ask her if she did care? She had no business to go off and leave him like this! He did not know where she was.

Don struck a match and looked at his watch. It was eight-thirty. Somehow, he must find her. He had her old address, and it was possible that she had left word where she had gone. At any rate, this was the only clue he had.

He made his way back to the Avenue, and, at a pace that at times almost broke into a run, went toward the club and the first taxi he saw. In twenty minutes he was standing on the steps where he had last seen her. She had wished him to say "good-bye"; but he remembered that he had refused to say "good-bye."

The landlady knew Miss Winthrop's address, but she was not inclined to give it to him. At first she did not like the expression in his eyes. He was too eager.

"Seems to me," she argued, "she'd have

told parties where she was going if she wanted them to know."

"This is very important," he insisted.

"Maybe it's a lot more important to you than it is to her," she replied.

"But—"

"You can leave your name and address, and I'll write to her," she offered.

"Look here," Don said desperately. "Do you want to know what my business is with her?"

"It's none of my business, but—"

"I want to ask her to marry me," he broke in. "That's a respectable business, is n't it?"

He reached in his pocket and drew out a bill. He slipped it into her hand.

"Want to marry her?" exclaimed the woman. "Well, now, I would n't stand in the way of that. Will you step in while I get the address?"

"I'll wait here. Only hurry. There may be a late train."

She was back in a few seconds, holding a slip of paper in her hand.

"It's to Brenton, Maine, she's gone."

Don grabbed the paper.

"Thanks."

He was halfway down the steps when she called after him:—

"Good luck to ye, sir."

"Thanks again," he called back.

Then he gave his order to the driver:—

"To the Grand Central."

Don found that he could take the midnight train to Boston and connect there with a ten-o'clock train next morning. This would get him into Portland in time for a connection that would land him at Brenton at four that afternoon. He went back to the house to pack his bag. As he opened the door and went in, it seemed as if she might already be there — as if she might be waiting for him. Had she stepped forward to greet him and announce that dinner was ready, he would not have been greatly surprised. It was as if she had been here all this last year. But it was only Nora who came to greet him.

"I'm going away to-night for a few days — perhaps for two weeks," he told Nora.

"Yes, sir."

"I'll wire you what my plans are — either to-morrow or next day."

"And it is to be soon, sir?"

"I can't tell you for sure, Nora, until I've cleared up one or two little matters; but — you can wish me luck, anyway."

"I'll do that, sir."

"And the house is ready, is n't it?"

"Everything is ready, sir."

"That's fine. Now I'm going to pack."

His packing finished, Don went downstairs with still an hour or more on his hands before train-time. But he did not care to go anywhere. He was absolutely contented here. He was content merely to wander from room to room. He sat down at the piano in the dark, and for a long while played to her — played to her just the things he knew she would like.

It was half-past eleven before he left the house, and then he went almost reluctantly. She was more here than anywhere in the world except where he was going. He found himself quite calm about her here. The moment he came out on the street again he noticed a dif-

ference. His own phrase came back to frighten him: —

"She'd care like that — if she cared at all."

Supposing that after he found her, she did not care?

At the station he wondered if it were best to wire her, but decided against it. She might run away. It was never possible to tell what a woman might do, and Sally Winthrop was an adept at concealing herself. He remembered that period when, although he had been in the same office with her, she had kept herself as distant as if across the ocean. She had only to say, "Not at home," and it was as if she said, "I am not anywhere."

He went to his berth at once, and had, on the whole, a bad night of it. He asked himself a hundred questions that he could not answer — that Sally Winthrop alone could answer. Though it was only lately that he had prided himself on knowing her desires in everything, he was forced to leave all these questions unanswered.

At ten the next morning he took the train for Portland. At two he was on the train for

Brenton and hurrying through a strange country to her side.

When he reached Brenton he was disappointed not to find her when he stepped from the train. The station had been so closely identified with her through the long journey that he had lost sight of the fact that it existed for any other purpose. But only a few station loafers were there to greet him, and they revealed but an indifferent interest. He approached one of them.

"Can you tell me where Miss Winthrop is stopping?"

The man looked blank.

"No one of that name in this town," he finally answered.

"Is n't this Brenton?"

"It's Brenton, right enough."

"Then she's here," declared Don.

"Is she visitin'?" inquired the man.

Don nodded.

"A cousin, or something."

A second man spoke up:—

"Ain't she the one who's stopping with Mrs. Halliday?"

"Rather slight, with brown eyes," volunteered Don.

"Dunno the color of her eyes," answered the first man, with a wink at the second. "But thar's some one stoppin' thar. Been here couple days or so."

"That's she," Don decided.

He drew a dollar bill from his pocket.

"I want one of you to take a note to her from me."

He wrote on the back of a card:—

I'm at the station. I must see you at once.
DON.

"Take that to her right away and bring me an answer," he ordered.

The man took both bill and card and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIX

MOSTLY SALLY

It was an extremely frightened girl who within five minutes appeared upon the station platform. She was quite out of breath, for she had been running. As he came toward her with outstretched hands, she stared at him from head to foot, as if to make sure he was not minus an arm or a leg.

"Won't you even shake hands with me?" he asked anxiously.

"You — you gave me such a fright," she panted.

"How?"

"I thought — I thought you must have been run over."

He seemed rather pleased.

"And you cared?" he asked eagerly.

She was fast recovering herself now.

"Well, it would n't be unnatural to care, would it, if you expected to find a friend all run over?"

"And, now that you find I'm not a mangled corpse, you don't care at all."

Of course he would n't choose to be a corpse, because he would not have been able to enjoy the situation; but, on the whole, he was sorry that he did not have a mangled hand or something to show. Evidently his whole hand did not interest her — she had not yet offered to take it.

"How in the world did you get here?" she demanded.

"I took the train."

"But — has anything happened?"

"Lots of things have happened," he said. "That's what I want to tell you about."

He looked around. His messenger was taking an eager interest in the situation.

"That's why I came to see you," he explained. "Of course, if it's necessary to confide also in your neighbor over there, I'll do it; but I thought that perhaps you could suggest some less public place."

She appeared frightened in a different sort of way now.

"But, Mr. Pendleton —"

"I'm going to remain here perhaps a day or two," he interrupted.

To him the most obvious course was for her to ask him to meet her aunt and invite him to remain there.

"Is there a hotel in town?" he asked.

"I — I don't think so," she faltered.

"Then," he decided, "I must find some sort of camping-place. If you know a bit of woods where I can spend the night, you might direct me."

He was quite himself now. It was a relief to her. It put her quite off her guard.

"Won't you come and meet my aunt?" she invited.

He picked up his suitcase at once.

"It will be a pleasure," he answered.

She could not imagine what her aunt would think when she appeared so abruptly escorting a young man with a suitcase, but that did not seem to matter. She knew no better than her aunt what had brought him here; but, now that he was here, it was certain that she must take care of him. She could not allow him to wander homelessly around the village or per-

mit him to camp out like a gypsy. It did not occur to her to reason that this predicament was wholly his fault. All the old feeling of responsibility came back.

As they walked side by side down the street, he was amazed to see how much good even these two days in the country had done her. There was more color in her cheeks and more life in her walk. She was wearing a middy blouse, and that made her look five years younger.

She looked up at him.

"I — I thought you had something very important to do in these next few days," she reminded him.

"I have," he answered.

"Then — I don't understand how you came here."

On the train it had seemed to him that he must explain within the first five minutes; but, now that she was actually within sound of his voice, actually within reach, there seemed to be no hurry. In her presence his confidence increased with every passing minute. For one thing, he could argue with her, and whenever

in the past he had argued with her he had succeeded.

"I needed you to explain certain things to me," he replied.

She looked away from him.

"About what?" she asked quickly.

"About getting me married."

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

He could not tell what she meant by the little cry. He would have asked her had they not at that moment turned into a gate that led through an old-fashioned garden to a small white cottage.

"I'll have to run ahead and prepare Mrs. Halliday," she said.

So she left him upon the doorstep, and he took off his hat to the cool, pine-laden breeze that came from a mountain in the distance. He liked this town at once. He liked the elm-lined village street, and the snug white houses and the quiet and content of it. Then he found himself being introduced rather jerkily to Mrs. Halliday — a tall, thin New England type, with kindly eyes set in a sharp face. It was evident at once that after her first keen inspec-

tion of this stranger she was willing to accept him with much less suspicion than Miss Winthrop.

"I told Sally this morning, when I spilled the sugar, that a stranger was coming," she exclaimed. "Now you come right upstairs. I reckon you'll want to wash up after that long ride."

"It's mighty good of you to take me in this way," he said.

"Laws sake, what's a spare room for?"

She led the way to a small room with white curtains at the windows and rag rugs upon the floor and a big silk crazy-quilt on an old four-poster bed. She hurried about and found soap and towels for him, and left him with the hope that he would make himself at home.

And at once he did feel at home. He felt at home just because Sally Winthrop was somewhere in the same house. That was the secret of it. He had felt at home in the station as soon as she appeared; he had felt at home in the village because she had walked by his side; and now he felt at home here. And by that he meant that he felt very free and very happy and

very much a part of any section of the world she might happen to be in. It had been so in New York, and it was so here.

He was downstairs again in five minutes, looking for Sally Winthrop. It seemed that Mrs. Halliday's chief concern now was about supper, and that Sally was out in the kitchen helping her. He found that out by walking in upon her and finding her in a blue gingham apron. Her cheeks turned very red and she hurriedly removed the apron.

"Don't let me disturb you," he protested.

That was very easy to say, but he did disturb her. Then Mrs. Halliday shooed her out of the kitchen.

"You run right along now; I can attend to things myself."

"I'd like to help, too," said Don.

"Run along — both of you," insisted Mrs. Halliday. "You'd be more bother than help."

So the two found themselves on the front steps again, and Don suggested they remain there. The sun was getting low and bathing the street in a soft light.

"I have something very important to say to you," he began.

"To me?" she exclaimed.

Again there was the expression of astonishment and — something more.

"It's about my getting married," he nodded.

"But I thought that was all settled!"

"It is," he admitted.

"Oh!"

"I think it was settled long before I knew it."

"Then you're to be married right away?"

"I hope so."

"That will be nice."

"It will be wonderful," he exclaimed. "It will be the most wonderful thing in the world!"

"But why did you come 'way down here?"

"To talk it over with you. You see, a lot depends upon you."

"Me?"

Again that questioning personal pronoun.

"A great deal depends upon you. You are to say when it is to be."

"Mr. Pendleton!"

"I wish you'd remember I'm not in the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves now. Can't you call me just Don?"

She did not answer.

"Because," he explained, "I mean to call you Sally."

"You must n't."

"I mean to call you that all the rest of my life," he went on more soberly. "Don't you understand how much depends upon you?"

Startled, she glanced up swiftly. What she saw in his eyes made her catch her breath. He was speaking rapidly now:—

"Everything depends upon you — upon no one else in all the world but you. I discovered that in less than a day after you left. It's been like that ever since I met you. I love you, and I've come down here to marry you — to take you back with me to the house that's all ready — back to the house you've made ready."

She gave a little cry and covered her face with her hands.

"Don't do that," he pleaded.

"IT'S ABOUT MY GETTING MARRIED"

She looked as if she were crying.

"Sally — Sally Winthrop, you are n't crying?"

He placed a hand upon her arm.

"Don't touch me!" she sobbed.

"Why should n't I touch you?"

"Because — because this is all a horrible mistake."

"I'm trying to correct a horrible mistake," he answered gently.

"No — no — no. You must go back to her — right away."

"To Frances?"

She nodded.

"You don't understand. She does n't want to marry me."

"You asked her?"

"Yes."

"And then — and then you came to me?"

"Yes, little girl. She sent me to you. She — why, it was she that made me see straight!"

Her face was still concealed.

"I — I wish you'd go away," she sobbed.

"You don't understand!" he answered fiercely. "I'm not going away. I love you, and

I've come to get you. I won't go away until you come with me."

She rose to her feet, her back toward him.

"Go away!" she cried.

Then she ran into the house, leaving him standing there dazed.

CHAPTER XXX

DON EXPLAINS

It seemed that, in spite of her business training and the unsentimental outlook on life upon which she had rather prided herself, Sally Winthrop did not differ greatly from other women. Shut up in her room, a deep sense of humiliation overwhelmed her. He had asked this other girl to marry him, and when she refused he had come to her! He thought as lightly of her as that — a mere second choice when the first was made impossible. He had no justification for that. This other had sent him to her — doubtless with a smile of scorn upon her pretty lips.

But what was she crying about and making her nose all red? She should have answered him with another smile and sent him back again. Then he would have understood how little she cared — would have understood that she did not care enough even to feel the sting of such an insult as this. For the two days she had

been here awaiting the announcement of his marriage she had said over and over again that she did not care — said it the first thing upon waking and the last thing upon retiring. Even when she woke up in the night, as she did many times, she said it to herself. It had been a great comfort to her, for it was a full and complete answer to any wayward thoughts that took her unaware.

She did not care about him, so what was she sniveling about and making her nose all red? She dabbed her handkerchief into her eyes and sought her powder-box. If he had only kept away from her everything would have been all right. Within the next ten or eleven days she would have readjusted herself and been ready to take up her work again, with another lesson learned. She would have gone back to her room wiser and with still more confidence in herself. And now he was downstairs, waiting for her. There was no way she could escape him. She must do all those things without the help of seclusion. She must not care, with him right before her eyes.

She began to cry again. It was not fair. It

was the sense of injustice that now broke her down. She was doing her best, and no one would help her. Even he made it as hard for her as possible. On top of that he had added this new insult. He wished a wife, and if he could not have this one he would take that one — as Farnsworth selected his stenographers. He had come to her because she had allowed herself to lunch with him and dine with him and walk with him. He had presumed upon what she had allowed herself to say to him. Because she had interested herself in him and tried to help him, he thought she was to be as lightly considered as this. He had not waited even a decent interval, but had come to her direct from Frances — she of the scornful smile.

Once again Sally stopped crying. If only she could hold that smile before her, all might yet be well. Whenever she looked into his eyes and thought them tender, she must remember that smile. Whenever his voice tempted her against her reason, she must remember that — for to-night, anyhow; and to-morrow he must go back. Either that or she would leave. She

could not endure this very long — certainly not for eleven days.

"Sally — where are you?"

It was Mrs. Halliday's voice from downstairs.

"I'm coming," she answered.

The supper was more of an epicurean than a social success. Mrs. Halliday had made hot biscuit, and opened a jar of strawberry preserves, and sliced a cold chicken which she had originally intended for to-morrow's dinner; but, in spite of that, she was forced to sit by and watch her two guests do scarcely more than nibble.

"I declare, I don't think young folks eat as much as they useter in my days," she commented.

Don tried to excuse himself by referring to a late dinner at Portland; but Sally, as usual, had no excuse whatever. She was forced to endure in silence the searching inquiry of Mrs. Halliday's eyes as well as Don's. For the half-hour they were at table she heartily wished she was back again in her own room in New York. There, at least, she would have been free to

shut herself up, away from all eyes but her own. Moreover, she had to look forward to what she should do at the end of the meal. For all she saw, she was going to be then in even a worse plight than she was now. For he would be able to talk, and she must needs answer and keep from crying. Above all things else, she must keep from crying. She did not wish him to think her a little fool as well as other things.

She was forced to confess that after the first five minutes Don did his best to relieve the tension. He talked to Mrs. Halliday about one thing and another, and kept on talking. And, though it was quite evident to her that he had no appetite, he managed to consume three of the hot biscuit. After supper, when she rose to help her aunt in the kitchen, he wished also to help. But Mrs. Halliday would have neither of them. That made it bad for her again, for it left her with no alternative but to sit again upon the front porch with him. So there they were again, right back where they started.

"What did you run into the house for?" he demanded.

"Please let's not talk any more of that," she pleaded.

"But it's the nub of the whole matter," he insisted.

"I went in because I did not want to talk any more."

"Very well. Then you need n't talk. But you can listen, can't you?"

"That's the same thing."

"It's exactly the opposite thing. You can listen, and just nod or shake your head. Then you won't have to speak a word. Will you do that?"

It was an absurd proposition, but she was forced either to accept it or to run away again. Somehow, it did not appear especially dignified to keep on running away, when in the end she must needs come back again. So she nodded.

"Let's go back to the beginning," he suggested. "That's somewhere toward the middle of my senior year. I'd known Frances before that, but about that time she came on to Boston, and we went to a whole lot of dances and things together."

He paused a moment.

"I wish I'd brought a picture of her with me," he resumed thoughtfully, "because she's really a peach."

Miss Winthrop looked up quickly. He was apparently serious.

"She's tall and dark and slender," he went on, "and when she's all togged up she certainly looks like a queen. She had a lot of friends in town, and we kept going about four nights a week. Then came the ball games, and then Class Day. You ever been to Class Day?"

Miss Winthrop shook her head with a quick little jerk.

"It's all music and Japanese lanterns, and if you're sure of your degree it's a sort of fairy-land where nothing is quite real. You just feel at the time that it's always going to be like that. It was then I asked her to marry me."

Miss Winthrop was sitting with her chin in her hands, looking intently at the brick path leading to the house.

"You listening?"

She nodded jerkily.

"It seemed all right then. And it seemed all right after that. Stuyvesant was agreeable enough, and so I came on to New York. Then followed Dad's death. Dad was a queer sort, but he was square as a die. I'm sorry he went before he had a chance to meet you. I did n't realize what good pals we were until afterward. But, anyway, he died, and he tied the property all up as I've told you. Maybe he thought if he did n't I'd blow it in, because I see now I'd been getting rid of a good many dollars. I went to Frances and told her all about it, and offered to cancel the engagement. But she was a good sport and said she'd wait until I earned ten thousand a year. You listening?"

She nodded.

"Because it's right here you come in. I was going to get it inside a year, and you know just about how much chance I stood. But it looked easy to her, because her father was pulling down about that much a month, and not killing himself either. I did n't know any more about it than she did; but the difference between us was that as soon as I was on the inside I learned a lot she did n't learn. I learned

how hard it is to get ten thousand a year; more than that, I learned how unnecessary it is to get it. That's what you taught me."

"I — I did n't mean to," she interrupted.

"You're talking," he reminded her.

She closed her lips firmly together.

"Whether you meant to or not is n't the point. You did teach me that and a lot of other things. I did n't know it at the time, and went plugging ahead, thinking everything was just the same when it was n't at all. Frances was headed one way and I was headed another. Then she went abroad, and after that I learned faster than ever. I learned what a home can be made to mean, and work can be made to mean, and life can be made to mean. All those things you were teaching me. I did n't know it, and you did n't know it, and Frances did n't know it. That ten thousand grew less and less important to me, and all the while I thought it must be growing less and less important to her. I thought that way after the walks in the park and the walks in the country and that night at Coney."

She shuddered.

"I thought it even after she came back — even after my talk with Stuyvesant. He told me I was a fool and that Frances would n't listen to me. I did n't believe him and put it up to her. And then — for the first time — I saw that what I had been learning she had not been learning."

Don turned and looked at the girl by his side. It was growing dark now, so that he could not see her very well; but he saw that she was huddled up as he had found her that day in the little restaurant.

"Frances did n't have the nerve to come with me," he said. "Her father stood in the way, and she could n't get by him. I want to be fair about this. At the beginning, if she'd come with me I'd have married her — though Lord knows how it would have worked out. But she did n't dare — and she's a pretty good sport, too. There's a lot in her she does n't know anything about. It would do her good to know you."

Again he paused. It was as if he were trying hard to keep his balance.

"I want her to know you," he went on.

"Because, after all, it was she who made me see you. There, in a second, in the park, she pointed you out to me, until you stood before me as clear as the star by the Big Dipper. She said, 'It's some other girl you're seeing in me — a girl who would dare to go hungry with you.' Then I knew. So I came right to you."

She was still huddled up.

"And here I am," he concluded.

There he was. He did not need to remind her of that. Even when she closed her eyes so that she might not see him, she was aware of it. Even when he was through talking and she did not hear his voice, she was aware of it. And, though she was miserable about it, she would have been more miserable had he been anywhere else.

"I'm here, little girl," he said patiently.

"Even after I told you to go away," she choked.

"Even after you told me to go away."

"If you only had n't come at all!"

"What else was there for me to do?"

"You — you could have gone to that camp with her. She wanted you to go."

"I told her I could n't go there — long before I knew why."

"You could have gone — oh, there are so many other places you could go! And this is the only place I *could* go."

"It's the only place I could go, too. Honest, it was. I'd have been miserable anywhere else, and — well, you are n't making it very comfortable for me here."

It seemed natural to have him blame her for his discomfort when it was all his own fault. It seemed so natural, in the midst of the confusion of all the rest of the tangle, that it was restful.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"That's something," he nodded.

"I — I guess the only thing for me to do is to go away myself."

"Where?"

"Back to New York. Oh, I wish I had n't taken a vacation!"

"We'll go back if you say so; but it seems foolish after traveling all this distance."

"I meant to go back alone," she hastened to correct him.

"And leave me with Mrs. Halliday?"

"Please don't mix things all up!"

"It's you who are mixing things all up," he said earnestly. "That is n't like you, little girl. It's more like you to straighten things out. There's a straight road ahead of us now, and if you'll only take it we'll never leave it again. All we've got to do is to hunt up a parson and get married, and then we'll go anywhere you say, or not go anywhere at all. It's as simple as that. Then, when our vacation is up, I'll go back to Carter, Rand & Seagraves, and I'll tell Farnsworth he'll have to get a new stenographer. Maybe he'll discharge me for that, but if he does n't I'll tell him I want to get out and sell. And then there's nothing more to it. With you to help —"

He tried to find her hands, but she had them pressed over her eyes.

"With you back home to help," he repeated — "there 's not anything in the world we won't get."

And the dream woman in Sally answered to the woman on the steps: —

"There's not anything more in the world we'll want when we're home."

But Don did not hear that. All he heard was a sigh. To the dream woman what he said sounded like music; but the woman on the steps answered cynically: —

"All he is saying to you now he said to that other. There, where the music was playing and the Japanese lanterns were bobbing, he said it to her. That was a fairy world, as this is a fairy night; but back in New York it will all be different. There are no fairies in New York. Every time you have thought there were, you have been disappointed."

She rose swiftly to her feet.

"Oh, we must n't talk about it!" she exclaimed.

He too rose, and he placed both his hands upon her shoulders.

"I don't understand," he said quickly. "What is it you don't believe?"

"I don't believe in fairies," she answered bitterly.

"Don't you believe that I love you?"

"To-night — perhaps," she answered.

Her eyes were not meeting his.

"You don't believe my love will last?"

"I — I don't know."

"Because of Frances?"

"Everything is so different in New York," she answered.

"Because of Frances?"

She was not sure enough herself to answer that. She did not wish to be unfair. He removed his hands from her shoulders and stood back a little.

"I thought you'd understand about her. I thought you were the one woman in the world who'd understand."

She looked up quickly.

"Perhaps it's easier for men to understand those things than women," she said.

"There's so little to understand."

As he spoke, truly it seemed so. But it was always that way when she was with him. Always, if she was not very careful, he made her see exactly as he saw. It was so at Jacques'; it was so at Coney. But her whole life was at stake now. If she made a mistake, one way or the other, she must live it out — in New York. She must be by herself when she reached her decision.

"In the morning," she gasped.

"All right," he answered.

He took her hand — catching her unawares.

"See," he said. "Up there is the star I gave you. It will always be there — always be yours. And, if you can, I want you to think of me as like that star."

Upstairs in her room that night, Miss Winthrop sat by her window and tried to place herself back in New York — back in the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves. It was there, after all, and not up among the stars, that she had gained her experience of men.

From behind her typewriter she had watched them come and go, or if they stayed had watched them in the making. It was from behind her typewriter she had met Don. She remembered every detail of that first day: how he stood at the ticker like a boy with a new toy, waiting for Farnsworth; how he came from Farnsworth's office and took a seat near her, and for the next half-hour watched her fingers until she became nervous. At first she thought he was going to be "fresh." Her mind was made up to squelch him at the first oppor-

tunity. Yet, when it had come lunch-time and he sat on, not knowing what to do, she had taken pity on him. She knew he would sit on there until night unless some one showed an interest in him. She was glad now that she had, because he had been hungry. Had it not been for her, he would not have had anything to eat all day — possibly not all that week. She would never cease being glad that she had discovered this fact in time.

But she had intended that her interest should cease, once she had made sure that he was fed and in receipt of his first week's salary. That much she would do for any man, good, bad, or indifferent. That was all she had intended. She could say that honestly. When he had appeared at her lunch-place the second and third time, she had resented it. But she had also welcomed his coming. And, when she had bidden him not to come, she had missed him.

Right here she marked a distinction between him and the others. She missed him outside the office — not only at noon, but at night. When she had opened that absurd box of

flowers, she brought him into her room with her. She saw now that at the precise moment she opened that box she had lost her point of view. If she had wished to maintain it, she should have promptly done the box up again and sent it back to him.

After this their relation had changed. There could be no doubt about that. However, except for the initial fault of not returning the roses, she could not see where it was distinctly her fault. She had gone on day after day, unaware that any significant change was taking place. There had been the dinner at Jacques', and then —

With her chin in her hands, she sat by the open window and lived over again those days. Her eyes grew afire and her cheeks grew rosy and a great happiness thrilled her. So — until they reached that night at Coney and Frances smiled through the dark at her.

Then she sprang to her feet and paced the floor, with the color gone from her cheeks. During all those glorious days this other girl had been in the background of his thoughts. It was for her he had been working — of her

he had been thinking. She clenched her hands and faced the girl.

"Why did n't you stay home with him, then?" she cried. "You left him to me and I took care of him. He'd have lost his position if it had n't been for me.

"I kept after him until he made good," she went on. "I saw that he came to work on time, I showed him what to learn. It was I, not you. that made him."

She was speaking out loud — fiercely. Suddenly she stopped. She raised her eyes to the window — to the little star by the Big Dipper. Gently, as a mother speaks, she said again: —

"I made him — not you."

Sally Winthrop sank into a chair. She began to cry — but softly now.

"You 're mine, Don," she whispered. "You 're mine because I took care of you."

A keen breeze from the mountains swept in upon her. She rose and stole across the hall to Mrs. Halliday's room. That good woman awoke with a start.

"What is it?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, I'm sorry if I woke you," answered

the girl. "But it's turned cold, and I wondered if Don — if Mr. Pendleton had enough bedclothes."

"Laws sake," answered Mrs. Halliday. "I gave him two extra comforters, and if that ain't enough he deserves to freeze."

CHAPTER XXXI

SALLY DECIDES

THE clarion call of Mrs. Halliday's big red rooster announcing fervently his discovery of a thin streak of silver light in the east brought Don to his elbow with a start. For a moment he could not place himself, and then, as he realized where he was and what this day meant for him, he took a long deep breath.

"In the morning," she had said.

Technically it was now morning, though his watch informed him that it was not yet five. By now, then, she had made her decision. Somewhere in this old house, perhaps within sound of his voice, she was waiting with the verdict that was to decide whether he was going back to New York the happiest or the unhappiest man in all Christendom. No, that was not quite right either. Even if she said "No" that would not decide it. It would mean only another day of waiting, because he was going to keep right on trying to make her

understand — day after day, all summer and next winter and the next summer if necessary. He was going to do that because, if he ever let go of this hope, then he would be letting go of everything.

He found it quite impossible to sleep again and equally impossible to lie there awake. Jumping from bed he dressed, shaved, and went downstairs, giving Mrs. Halliday the start of her life when he came upon her as she was kindling the kitchen fire.

"Land sakes alive," she gasped, "I did n't expect to see you for a couple hours."

"I know it's early," he answered uncomfortably; "I don't suppose Sally is up?"

Mrs. Halliday touched a match to the kindling and put the stove covers back in place.

"There is n't anything lazy about Sally, but she generally does wait until the sun is up," she returned.

She filled the teakettle and then, adjusting her glasses, took a more critical look at Don.

"Was n't ye warm enough last night?" she demanded.

"Plenty, thank you," he answered.

"Perhaps bein' in new surroundings bothered you," she suggested; "I can't ever sleep myself till I git used to a place."

"I slept like a log," he assured her.

"Is this the time ye ginerally git up in New York?"

"Not quite as early as this," he admitted. "But, you see, that rooster —"

"I see," she nodded. "And ye kind of hoped it might wake up Sally too?"

"I took a chance," he smiled.

"Well, now, as long as ye seem so anxious I'll tell ye something; maybe it did. Anyhow, I heard her movin' round afore I came down. Draw a chair up to the stove and make yourself comfortable."

"Thanks."

The dry heat from the burning wood was already warming the room. Outside he heard the morning songs of the birds. It no longer seemed early to him. It was as though the world were fully awake, just because he knew now that Sally was awake. For a few minutes Mrs. Halliday continued her tasks as though unmindful that he was about. It was such a

sort of friendly acceptance of him as part of the household that he began to feel as much at home here as though it were his usual custom to appear at this hour. There was something more friendly about even Mrs. Halliday's back than about the faces of a great many people he knew. It looked as though it had borne a great many burdens, but having borne them sturdily was ready for more. It invited confidences. Then the teakettle began to bubble and sing and that invited confidences too. He was choking with things he wished to say — preferably to Sally herself, but if that were not possible, then Mrs. Halliday was certainly the next best confidante. Besides, being the closest relative of Sally's it was only fitting and proper that she should be told certain facts. Sooner or later she must know and now seemed a particularly opportune time. Don rose and moved his chair to attract her attention.

"Mrs. Halliday —" he began.

"Wal?" she replied, without turning. She was at that moment busy over the biscuit board.

"There's something I think I ought to tell you."

She turned instantly at that — turned, adjusted her spectacles, and waited.

"I — I've asked Sally to marry me," he confessed.

For a moment her thin, wrinkled face remained immobile. Then he saw a smile brighten the shrewd gray eyes.

"You don't say!" she answered. "I've been wonderin' just how long ye'd be tellin' me that."

"You knew? Sally told you?" he exclaimed.

"Not in so many words, as ye might say," she answered. "But laws sake, when a girl wakes me up to say she does n't think a young man has blankets enough on his bed in this kind of weather —"

"She did that?" interrupted Don.

"Thet's jest what she did. But long afore thet you told me yourself."

"I?"

"Of course. It's jest oozin' out all over you."

She came nearer. For a second Don felt as

though those gray eyes were boring into his soul.

"Look here, young man," she said. "What did Sally say?"

"She said she'd let me know this morning," he answered.

"And you've been blamin' my old rooster for gettin' you up?"

"Not blaming him exactly," he apologized.

"And you are n't sure whether she's goin' to say yes or goin' to say no?"

Don's lips tightened.

"I'm not sure whether she's going to say yes or no this morning. But, believe me, Mrs. Halliday, before she dies she's going to say yes."

Mrs. Halliday nodded approvingly. She went further; she placed a thin hand on Don's shoulder. It was like a benediction. His heart warmed as though it had been his mother's hand there.

"Don," she said, as naturally as though she had been saying it all her life, "I don't know much about you in one way. But I like your face and I like your eyes. I go a lot by a man's eyes. More'n that, I know Sally, and there

was never a finer, honester girl made than she is. If she has let you go as far as this, I don't think I'd worry myself to death."

"That's the trouble," he answered. "She did n't let me go as far as this. I — I just went."

Mrs. Halliday smiled again.

"Mebbe you think so," she admitted.

"You see —" he stammered.

But at that moment he heard a rustle of skirts behind him. There stood Sally herself — her cheeks very red, with a bit of a frown above her eyes. It was Mrs. Halliday who saved the day.

"Here, now, you two," she stormed as she went back to her biscuit board. "Both of you clear out of here until breakfast is ready. You belong outdoors where the birds are singing."

"I'll set the table, Aunty," replied Sally grimly.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," replied Mrs. Halliday.

She crossed the room and, taking Sally by one arm she took Don by the other. She led them to the door.

"Out with you," she commanded.

Alone with her Don turned to seek Sally's eyes and saw the frown still there.

"I — I told her," he admitted; "I could n't help it. I've been up for an hour and I had to talk to some one."

He took her arm.

"You've decided?" he asked.

His face was so tense, his voice so eager, that it was as much as she could do to remain vexed. Still, she resented the fact that he had spoken to her aunt without authority. It was a presumption that seemed to take for granted her answer. It was as though he thought only one answer possible.

"Heart of me," he burst out, "you've decided?"

"You — you had no right to tell her," she answered.

"Come down the road a bit," he pleaded.

He led her down the path and along the country road between fields wet with dew. The air was clean and sweet and the sky overhead a spotless blue. It was the freshest and cleanest world he had ever seen and she was one with it.

"I only told her what she already knew," he said.

"She knew?"

He spoke in a lower voice — a voice gentle and trembling.

"She said you came in last night after she had gone asleep —"

Sally covered her face with her hands.

"Oh," she gasped, "she — she told you that?"

He reached up and gently removed her hands. He held them tight in both of his.

"It was good of you to think of me like that. It was like you," he said.

All the while he was drawing her nearer and nearer to him. She resisted. At least she thought she was resisting, but it did n't seem to make any difference. Nearer his eyes came to hers; nearer his lips came to hers. She gave a quick gasp as one before sudden danger. Then she felt his warm lips against hers and swayed slightly. But his arms were about her. They were strong about her, so that, while she felt as though hanging dizzily over a precipice, she at the same moment never felt safer

in her life. With his lips against her lips, she closed her eyes until, to keep from losing herself completely, she broke free. Her cheeks scarlet, her breath coming short, her eyes like stars, she stared at him a moment, and then like a startled fawn turned and ran for the house. He followed, but her feet were tipped with wings. He did not catch her until she had burst into the kitchen, where in some fear Mrs. Halliday gathered her into her arms.

"She has n't answered me even yet," he explained to Mrs. Halliday.

"Oh, Don," cried the trembling girl, her voice smothered in Mrs. Halliday's shoulder. "You dare say that after —"

"Well, after what?" demanded Mrs. Halliday.

CHAPTER XXXII

BARTON APPEARS

THE details of the wedding Mrs. Halliday decided to take over into her own hands.

"You two can just leave that to me," she informed them.

"But look here," protested Don, "I don't see why we need bother with a lot of fuss and—"

"What business is this of yours?" Mrs. Halliday challenged him.

"Only we have n't much time," he warned.

"There's going to be time enough for Sally to be married properly," she decided.

That was all there was to it. It seems that tucked away up in the attic there was an old trunk and tucked away in that a wedding dress of white silk which had been worn by Sally's mother.

"It's been kept ag'in' this very day," explained Mrs. Halliday, "though I will say that I was beginnin' to git discouraged."

The dress was brought out, and no more auspicious omen could have been furnished Mrs. Halliday than the fact that, except in several unimportant details, Sally could have put it on and worn it, just as it was. Not only did it fit, but the intervening years had brought back into style again the very mode in which it had been designed, so that, had she gone to a Fifth Avenue dressmaker, she could have found nothing more in fashion. Thus it was possible to set the wedding date just four days off, for Saturday. That was not one moment more of time than Mrs. Halliday needed in which to put the house in order — even with the hearty coöperation of Don, who insisted upon doing his part, which included the washing of all the upper windows.

Those were wonderful days for him. For one thing he discovered that not only had there been given into his keeping the clear-seeing, steady-nerved, level-headed woman who had filled so large a share of his life this last year, but also another, who at first startled him like some wood nymph leaping into his path. She was so young, so vibrant with

life, so quick with her smiles and laughter — this other. It was the girl in her, long suppressed, because in the life she had been leading in town there had been no playground. Her whole attention there had been given to the subjection of the wild impulses in which she now indulged. She laughed, she ran, she reveled in being just her care-free, girlish self. Don watched her with a new thrill. He felt as though she were taking him back to her early youth — as though she were filling up for him all those years of her he had missed.

At night, about the usual time he was dining in town, Mrs. Halliday insisted that Sally should go to bed, as she herself did, which, of course, left Don no alternative but to go himself. There was no possible object in his remaining up after Sally was out of sight. But the early morning belonged to her and to him. At dawn he rose and when he came downstairs, he found her waiting for him. Though Mrs. Halliday protested that Sally was losing her beauty sleep she was not able to produce any evidence to prove it. If any one could look any fresher or more wonderful than Sally, as

she stepped out of the house by his side into the light of the newborn day, then there was no sense in it, because, as she was then, she filled his eyes and his heart to overflowing. She wore no hat, but except for this detail he was never conscious of how she was dressed. There was always too much to occupy him in her brown eyes, in her mouth, which, while losing nothing of its firmness, had acquired a new gentleness. He had always thought of her lips as cold, but he knew them better now. At the bend in the road where he had kissed her first, he kissed her again every morning. She always protested. That was instinctive. But in the end she submitted, because it always seemed so many hours since she had seen him last, and because she made him understand that not until the next day could he expect this privilege.

"What's the use of being engaged if I can't kiss you as often as I wish?" he demanded once.

"We're engaged in order to be married," she explained.

"And after we are married —"

"You wait and see," she answered, her cheeks as red as any schoolgirl's.

"But that's three days off," he complained.

Even to her, happy as she was, confident as she was, the interval to Saturday sometimes seemed like a very long space of time. For one thing, she felt herself at night in the grip of a kind of foreboding absolutely foreign to her. Perhaps it was a natural reaction from the high tension of the day, but at night she sometimes found herself starting to her elbow in an agony of fear. Before the day came, something would happen to Don, because such happiness as this was not meant for her. She fell a victim to all manner of wild fears and extravagant fancies. On the second night there was a heavy thunderstorm. She did not mind such things ordinarily. The majesty of the darting light and the rolling crash of the thunder always thrilled her. But this evening the sky was blotted out utterly and quick light shot from every point of the compass at once. As peal followed peal, the house shook. Even then it was not of herself she thought. She had no fear except for Don. This might be the ex-

planation of her foreboding. It happened, too, that his room was beneath the big chimney where if the house were hit the bolt would be most apt to strike. Dressing hastily in her wrapper and bedroom slippers, she stole into the hall. A particularly vicious flash illuminated the house for a second and then plunged it into darkness. She crept to Don's very door. There she crouched, resolved that the same bolt should kill them both. There she remained, scarcely daring to breathe until the shower passed.

It was a silly thing to do. When she came back to her own room, her cheeks were burning with shame. The next morning she was miserable in fear lest he discover her weakness. He did not, though he marveled at a new tenderness in her that had been born in the night.

The fourth day broke fair and Don found himself busy until noon helping with the decorations of green and of wild flowers; for though only a dozen or so neighbors had been asked, Mrs. Halliday was thorough in whatever she undertook. Had she been expecting a hundred she could have done no more in the

way of preparation except perhaps to increase the quantity of cake and ices.

Don himself had asked no one except old Barton, of Barton & Saltonstall, and him he did not expect, although he had received no reply to his invitation. What, then, was his surprise when toward the middle of the forenoon, as he was going into the house with an armful of pine boughs, he heard a voice behind him, —

"How do, Don?"

Turning, he saw Barton in a frock coat and a tall hat that he might have worn last at Pendleton, Senior's, wedding.

"For Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Don, dropping his pine boughs on the doorstep and rushing to meet him. "I call this mighty good of you."

"I could hardly do less for Pendleton's boy," answered Barton.

"Well, sir, you're mighty welcome. Come right in. Oh, Sally," he called.

Sally came on the run, not knowing what had happened. She wore a calico apron and had not found time to do her hair since morn-

ing. It was not exactly the costume she would have chosen in which first to meet Mr. Barton. Her cheeks showed it.

"Sally," said Don, "this is Mr. Barton — my father's lawyer. Mr. Barton, this is Miss Winthrop."

Barton bowed low with old-fashioned courtesy. Then he allowed his keen gray eyes to rest a moment upon hers.

"I am very glad to meet you," he said.

"Will you come in?" she asked. "I'm afraid the house is very much in disorder just now, but I want you to meet my aunt."

Mrs. Halliday was scarcely more presentable than Miss Winthrop, but the latter found a certain relief in that fact.

"I'm glad to know you," Mrs. Halliday greeted him cordially.

But what to do with him at just this time was a problem which would have baffled her had he not solved it for himself.

"Please don't let me interrupt the preparations," he begged. "I should not have ventured here — at just this time — except that I wanted to see Don about a few legal matters."

"Mr. Barton," explained Don to Sally, "is the man who had the pleasant duty thrust upon him of telling me that I was cut off without a cent."

"It was an unpleasant duty," nodded Barton, "but I hope it may be my good fortune to make up for that."

"I'm afraid the only place you can sit is on the front doorstep," laughed Sally.

"As good a place as any," answered Don, leading the way.

"Well," asked Don good-naturedly as soon as they were seated there, "what's the trouble now? I tell you right off it's got to be something mighty serious to jar me any at just this time."

"There was still another codicil to your father's will," explained Barton at once — "a codicil I have not been at liberty to read to you until now. It had, in fact, no point except in the contingency of your marriage."

"I hope you are n't going to take the house away from me," scowled Don.

"No," answered Barton slowly. "It has to do rather with an additional provision. The

substance of it is that in case you married any one — er — meeting with my approval, you were to be given an allowance of two thousand a year."

"Eh?"

"Two thousand a year. After that, one thousand a year additional for each child born of that marriage until the total allowance amounts to five thousand dollars. At that point the principal itself is to be turned over to you."

"Oh, Sally!" called Don.

She came running again. It was still four hours before they would be safely married and many things might happen in four hours.

"Sit down here and listen to this," he commanded. "Now, do you mind saying that all over again?"

Barton repeated his statement.

"What do you think of that?" inquired Don. "It's just as though I had my salary raised two thousand a year. Not only that — but the rest is up to you."

"Don!"

"Well, it is."

"And besides," she gasped, "Mr. Barton has not yet said he approves."

Mr. Barton arose.

"May I say that at once?" he smiled. "I do not think I have always given Don as much credit for his good judgment as I feel he should have been given."

"Good old Barton!" choked Don.

"There's one thing more," said Barton — "a — a little present for myself."

He handed Don an envelope.

"Thank you, sir," said Don, thrusting it unopened in his pocket. "And now it seems to me the least the bride can do is to let you kiss her."

"I 'm not a bride yet," answered Sally demurely, "but —"

She came to Barton's side and he kissed her on the cheek.

"It's too bad that Pendleton could n't have lived to know his son's wife," he said.

A little later Don gave Sally the envelope to open. It contained a check for five hundred dollars.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Don, "we're

rolling in wealth. I guess when we get back to town we'll have to buy a car."

"When we get back to town we'll open a bank account," corrected Sally.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A BULLY WORLD

As Sally came down the stairs at a quarter of three in her white silk wedding gown the wonder was how, after a morning of such honest hard work as she had put in, it was possible for her to look so fresh. Many a town bride, after spending the entire morning resting in preparation for such an event, has at the last moment failed to turn up with such apple-red cheeks or brilliant eyes. There was a gently serious expression about her mouth, to be sure, but that was not due to fatigue. In spite of her light-heartedness during the last few days she had been all the while keenly conscious that she was accepting a great responsibility. She was about to marry not only a lover, but a man whose future was to be in her keeping. Among other things he was to be a future partner in the firm of Carter, Rand & Seagraves, and that meant several years of very hard work ahead of them. Then there

were the secret responsibilities — the unborn responsibilities. These were not very definite, to be sure, but she felt them, timidly, gravely, in queer little tuggings at her heart.

When finally she stood in front of the clergyman with Don by her side, she felt, not that she was in a bower of wild flowers, but before an altar. The ritual for her had a deeply religious significance. She made her responses in a steady voice heard by every one in the room. When she made the promise "to love, cherish, and obey," she spoke it as though she meant it. It did not disturb her in the slightest to utter the word "obey," because she knew well that whatever commands came to her from Don would be of her own inspiring. To her this promise was no more than an agreement to obey her own best impulses.

The service seemed almost too brief for so solemn an undertaking, but when it was over, she reached for Don's hand and took it in a hearty grip that was more of a pledge than the ring itself. It sent a tingle to his heart and made his lips come together — the effect, a hundred times magnified, of the coach's slap

upon the back that used to thrill him just before he trotted on the field before a big game. He felt that the harder the obstacles to be overcome for her dear sake, the better. He would like to have had a few at that moment as a relief to his pent-up emotions.

He remembered in a sort of impatient daze the congratulations that followed — with the faces of Mrs. Halliday and Barton standing out a trifle more prominently — and then the luncheon. It seemed another week before she went upstairs to change into her traveling-dress; another week before she reappeared. Then came good-byes and the shower of rice, with an old shoe or so mixed in. He had sent her trunk the day before to the mountain hotel where they were to be for a week, but they walked to the station, he carrying her suitcase. Then he found himself on the train, and in another two hours they were at the hotel. It was like an impossible dream come true when finally they stood for the first time alone — she as his wife. He held out his arms to her and she came this time without protest.

"Heart of mine," he whispered as he kissed

her lips again and again, — "heart of mine, this is a bully old world."

"You've made it that, Don."

"I? I have n't had anything to do about it except to get you."

CHAPTER XXXIV

DON MAKES GOOD

THEY had not one honeymoon, but two or three. When they left the hotel and came back to town, it was another honeymoon to enter together the house in which she had played so important a part without ever having seen it. When they stepped out of the cab she insisted upon first seeing it from the outside, instead of rushing up the steps as he was for doing.

"Don," she protested, "I — I don't want to have such a pleasure over with all at once. I want to get it bit by bit."

There was not much to see, to be sure, but a door and a few windows — a section similar to sections to the right and left of which it was a part. But it was a whole house, a house with lower stories and upper stories and a roof — all his, all hers. To her there was something still unreal about it.

He humored her delay, though Nora was

standing impatiently at the door, anxious to see the Pendleton bride. But when she finally did enter, Nora, at the smile she received, had whatever fears might have been hers instantly allayed.

"Gawd bless ye," she beamed.

Sally refused to remove her wraps until she had made her inspection room by room, sitting down in each until she had grasped every detail. So they went from the first floor to the top floor and came back to the room which he had set apart for their room.

"Does it suit you, wife of mine?" he asked.

With the joy of it all, her eyes filled.

"It's even more beautiful than I thought it would be," she trembled.

For him the house had changed the moment she stepped into it. With his father alive, it had been his father's home rather than his; with his father gone, it had been scarcely more than a convenient resting-place. There had been moments — when he thought of Frances here — that it had taken on more significance, but even this had been due to Sally. When he thought he was making the house ready for another,

it had been her dear hand who had guided him. How vividly now he recalled that dinner at the little French restaurant when he had described his home to her — the home which was now her home too. It was at that moment she had first made her personality felt here.

Sally removed her hat and tidied her hair before the mirror in quite as matter-of-fact a fashion as though she had been living here ever since that day instead of only the matter of a few minutes. When she came downstairs, Nora herself seemed to accept her on that basis. To her suggestions, she replied, "Yes, Mrs. Pendleton," as glibly as though she had been saying it all her life.

They returned on a Saturday. On Monday Don was to go back to the office. Sally had sent in her resignation the day of her marriage and had received nice letters from both Carter and Farnsworth, with a check enclosed from the former for fifty dollars and from the latter for twenty-five dollars.

"What I'll have to do," said Don, as he retired Sunday night, "is to get a larger alarm-clock. It won't do to be late any more."

"You're right," agreed Sally. "But you won't need an alarm-clock."

"Eh?"

"You wait and see."

Sally was awake at six the next morning and Don himself less than one minute after.

"Time to get up," she called.

"I'm sleepy," murmured Don.

"Then to-morrow night you'll get to bed one hour earlier. But — up with you."

"Right-o," he answered as he sprang from bed. "But there's no need of your getting up."

"I'd be ashamed of myself if I did n't."

She had breakfast with him that first work morning as she planned to do every morning of her life after that.

"Now, Don," she warned as he was ready to leave, "mind you don't say anything about a raise in salary for a little while yet. I know Farnsworth, and he'll give it to you the moment he feels you've made good. Besides, we can afford to wait and — I don't know as I want you to have any more money than you have now. It's ridiculous for you to have that two thousand from your father."

"I guess we can use it, little woman," he laughed.

"We can save it," she insisted. "And, of course, it's pretty nice to have an emergency fund, only it sort of takes half the fun out of life to be so safe."

"It takes half the worry with it, too," he reminded her.

She thought a moment. Then she kissed him.

"Maybe it's good for people to worry a bit," she answered.

"You've already done your share," he returned. "You're going to meet me for lunch at twelve?"

"Yes, Don."

"Sure?"

"Of course, it's sure."

"I wish it were twelve now."

"You're not to think of me again until twelve comes — not once. You're to tend to business."

"I know, but —"

She kissed him again.

"Along with you."

She took his arm and led him to the door and

there — where, for all he cared, the whole street might have seen him — he turned quickly and kissed her once more.

Don was decidedly self-conscious when he stepped briskly into the office of Carter, Rand & Seagraves, with a brave attempt to give the impression that nothing whatever out of the ordinary had happened to him during his brief vacation. But Blake, as he expressed it to her later, was there with bells on. He spied him the moment he came through the door and greeted him with a whistled bar from the "Wedding March." Not content with that, he tore several sheets of office stationery into small bits and sprinkled him with it. He seemed to take it as more or less of a joke.

"You certainly put one over on us," exclaimed Blake.

"Well, let it go at that," Don frowned.

He was willing to take the horse-play, but there was something in the spirit with which it was done that he did not like.

"Always heard bridegrooms were a bit touchy," returned Blake.

Don stepped nearer.

"Touchy is n't the word, Blake," he said; "proud comes nearer it. Remember that I'm proud as the devil of the girl you used to see here. Just base your future attitude toward her and me on that."

A few minutes later Farnsworth restored his good humor. As he came into the private office, Farnsworth rose and extended his hand.

"I want to congratulate you, Pendleton," he said sincerely.

"Thank you," answered Don.

"We feel almost as though we had lost a partner in the firm," he smiled. "But I'm mighty glad for both of you. She was fitted for something a whole lot bigger than Wall Street."

"She taught me all I know about the game," confessed Don.

"You could n't have had a better teacher. Sit down. I want to talk over a change I have in mind."

Don felt his heart leap to his throat.

"I've wanted for some time another man to go out and sell," said Farnsworth. "Do you think you can handle it?"

"You bet," exclaimed Don.

Farnsworth smiled.

"You see," ran on Don in explanation, "I've been selling bonds to Sally — er — Mrs. Pendleton, for a month or more now."

"Selling her?"

"Imaginary bonds, you know."

Farnsworth threw back his head and laughed.

"Good! Good! But the true test will come when you try to sell her a real one. I'll bet it will have to be gilt-edged."

"And cheap," nodded Don.

"Well," said Farnsworth, "I want to try you on the selling staff for a while, anyway. Now, about salary —"

"Sally told me to forget that," said Don.

"I guess because she knew me well enough to know I would n't forget it. My intention is to pay men in this office what they are worth. Just what you may be worth in your new position I don't know, but I'm going to advance you five hundred; and if you make good you'll be paid in proportion as you make good. That satisfactory?"

"Absolutely."

"Then we're off," concluded Farnsworth.

Don met Sally at noon at the dairy lunch where they had gone so often.

"Come on, little woman," he greeted her. "This place may be all right for the wife of a clerk, but now you're the wife of a bond salesman."

"Don!"

"On a five-hundred-dollar raise."

"We'll stay right here," she said; "but I'm going to celebrate by having two chocolate éclairs."

CHAPTER XXXV

"HOME, JOHN"

IN December of the following year Frances came into her mother's room one afternoon, drawing on her gloves.

"Your new gown is very pretty," her mother said. "Where are you calling?"

"I have bridge at the Warrens' at four," she answered. "But I thought I might have time before that to drop in at Don's. He has telephoned me half a dozen times to call and see his baby, and I suppose he'll keep on until I go."

"You really ought to go."

Frances became petulant. "Oh, I know it, but — after all, a baby *is n't* interesting."

"They say it's a pretty baby. It's a boy, is n't it?"

"I don't know. Why don't you come along with me?"

"I'm not dressed, dear, but please to extend my congratulations."

"Yes, mother."

As John started to close the door of the limousine, Frances glanced at her watch.

"I wish to call at Mr. Pendleton's, but I must be at the Warrens' at four promptly. How much time must I allow?"

"A half hour, Miss."

"Very well, John."

Nora took her card, and came back with the request that she follow upstairs. "The baby's just waked up," Nora said.

Frances was disappointed. If she had to see a baby, she preferred, on the whole, seeing it asleep.

Mrs. Pendleton came to the nursery door with the baby in her arms — or rather a bundle presumably containing a baby.

"It's good of you to come," she smiled. "I think he must have waked up just to see you."

She spoke unaffectedly and with no trace of embarrassment, although when Nora presented the card she had for a second become confused. She had hoped that Don would be at home when this moment came.

"You're sure it's convenient for me to stay?" questioned Frances uneasily.

"Quite," answered Mrs. Pendleton. "I — I want you to see him when he's good-natured."

She crossed the room to the window, and removed a layer of swaddling clothes very gently. And there, revealed, lay Don, Jr. His face was still rather red, and his nose pudgy; but when he opened his eyes Frances saw Don's eyes. It gave her a start.

"He has his father's eyes," said the mother.

"There's no doubt of that," exclaimed Frances.

"And his nose — well, he has n't much of any nose yet," she smiled.

"He seems very small — all over."

"He weighed ten pounds this morning," said the mother.

Don, Jr., was waving his arms about, rather feebly, but with determination.

"He is very strong," the mother informed her. "Don declares that he has all the earmarks of a football player."

It seemed odd to hear this other speak so

familiarly of Don. Frances glanced up quickly — and met Mrs. Pendleton's eyes. It was as if the two challenged each other. But Frances was the first to turn away.

"Would you like to hold him a minute?" asked Mrs. Pendleton.

Frances felt her breath coming fast.

"I'm afraid I'd be clumsy."

"Hold out your arms and I'll put him in them."

Frances held out her arms, and Mrs. Pendleton gently laid the baby across them.

"Now hold him up to you," she said.

Frances obeyed. The sweet, subtle aroma of his hair reached her. The subtle warmth of his body met hers. As the mystic eyes opened below her eyes, a crooning lullaby hidden somewhere within her found its way to her throat and there stuck. She grew dizzy and her throat ached. Don, Jr., moved uneasily.

"He wants to come back now," said the mother as she took him.

"Good-bye," whispered Frances. "I may come again?"

"Come often," smiled Mrs. Pendleton.

Frances tiptoed from the room, and tiptoed all the way downstairs and through the hall.

As she stepped into the limousine, she said to John: "Home, please."

"But you said you must be at the Warrens' at four," John respectfully reminded her.

She sank back wearily in the seat.

"Home, John, please," she repeated.

THE END

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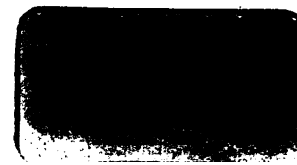
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